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# DOMESTIC SCENES.

A Novel.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

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By LADY HUMDRUM,

AUTHOR OF MORE WORKS THAN BEAR HER NAME.

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Tedious the tale with lengthen'd lectures fraught :  
We're less by precept than example taught.

ANONYMOUS.

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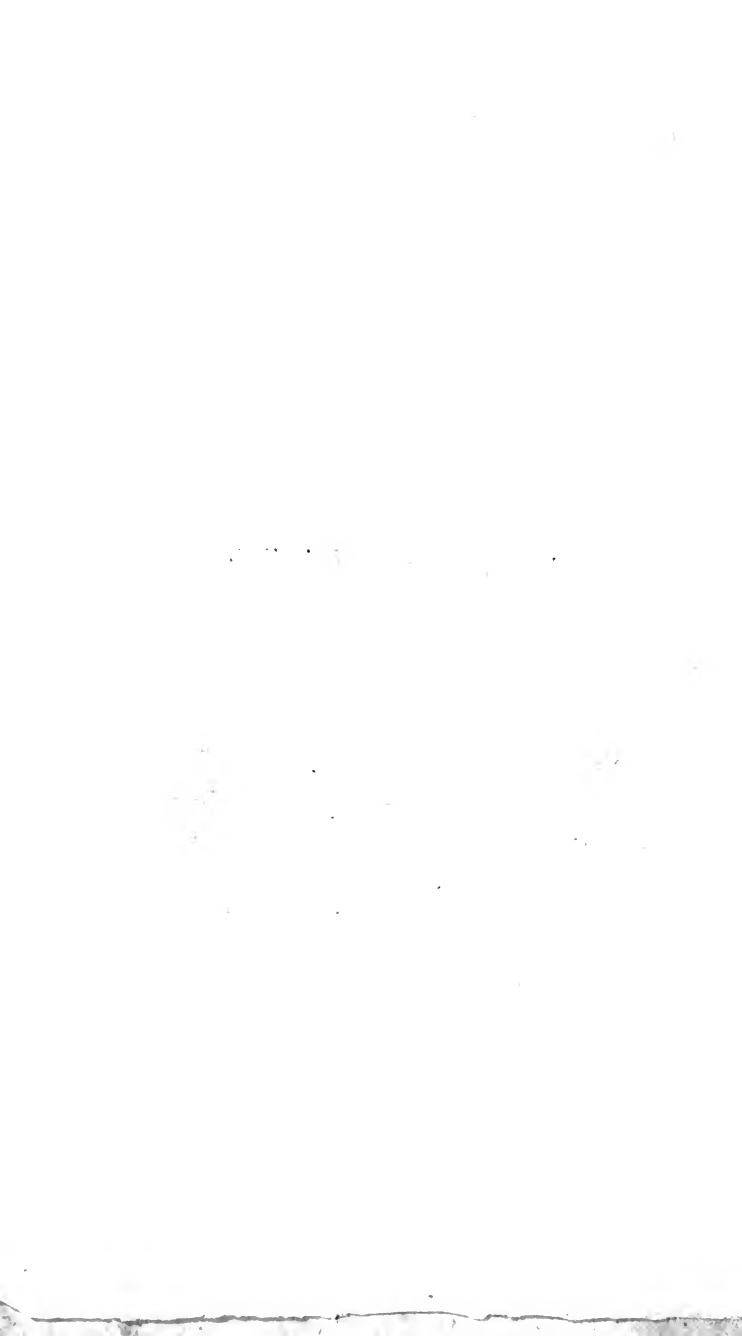
# DOMESTIC SCENES,

*HUMBLY INSCRIBED*

TO

WHOM THEY MAY AMUSE.

SHOULD an approving smile be excited — a tear of sympathy be dropped — or a right feeling be strengthened in the perusal of these pages, the Author will be satisfied, that the time bestowed upon them has not been wholly misemployed.



## ERRATA.

### Vol. I.

- Page 22. line 6. for 'Valcort,' read 'Valacort.'  
58. l. 15. for 'could but,' read 'could not but.'  
73. l. 1. for 'i,' read 'it.'  
148. l. 3. after 'effect,' add 'Mr. Villars rejoined.'  
273. l. 4. for 'setting,' read 'sitting.'  
367. l. 8. for 'assiduous,' read 'assiduous.'

### Vol. II.

- Page 81. line 18. for 'enquires,' read 'inquiries.'  
232. l. 10. for 'when,' read 'where.'  
247. l. 5. for 'ettiquette,' read 'etiquette.'  
278. l. 2. for '*bachelor* ! in short,' read '*bachelor* in short !'  
321. l. 9. for 'proportionally,' read 'proportionably.'

### Vol. III.

- Page 122. line 3. for 'seduct on,' read 'seduction.'  
127. l. 14. for des ination,' read 'destination.'  
172. l. 19. for 'sorrow,' read 'sorrows.'  
323. l. 8. for 'uncontrollably,' read 'uncontrolledly.'  
337. l. 11. for 'life snapped,' read 'life had snapped.'  
354. l. 17. for 'unexceptionable,' read 'unexceptionably.'  
381. l. 15. for 'Hypochondrium,' read 'Hypochondria.'



## DOMESTIC SCENES.

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### CHAP. I.

THE family at Hurstbourn Priory were assembled round their breakfast table, and Mr. Villars was eagerly unfolding his newspaper, in search of the leading paragraph, when the eye of his son Henry, catching the ship news, he joyfully exclaimed, “The Alcmena arrived in the Downs!”

“Thank Heaven!” cried Mrs. Villars, “our poor mourner will then be restored to us in safety!”

“And my letter have reached just in time to secure our meeting her on the road—how lucky!” said Emily; “do, dear

brother, order the carriage to the door ! I can be ready in a very few minutes—” starting up from her untasted breakfast.

“ Stop ! my dear child,” said the agitated mother, “you must not forget yourself—sit down quietly and eat your breakfast—recollect you have something to undergo !—Sophia’s distress will put your nerves to a severe test, depend upon it.”

“ Aye—and that will give me time just to run over this debate. I see it’s very important, and you shall take it to her—she will like to have the first tidings of it,” said Mr. Villars.

“ In the present miserable state of her mind,” Mrs. Villars observed, “it is not very likely that politics should—”

“ It’s on that very account, my dear,” interrupting her : “you know Soph was always my little politician—she’s the only one of the family that ever entered fully into my views of things—and nothing so likely to divert her thoughts from dwelling



upon the death of Delmere, as this very debate in my hand—it's admirably argued, let me tell you."

Emily having, in obedience to her mother, taken her cup of tea, now disappeared with her roll in her hand, and Mrs. Villars let the subject drop. Shortly after, she left the room, to assist in forwarding her children's departure; and quite aware of what her husband's 'running over a debate' would be, she engaged to save Emily from any displeasure the apparent inattention to her father's wish might occasion.

In fact he soon became so deeply absorbed in the subject matter before him, as wholly to lose sight of his children's journey, on which they had proceeded some miles, ere he had reached the end of his paper, which was never a very short process, even when the four sides of it were not, as in the present case, nearly filled with a debate. The fear of overlooking any thing material, causing

him to go it over and over again, backwards and forwards, till not even an advertisement escaped. It will naturally be concluded that some object of private interest prompted this excessive solicitude respecting public measures ; no such thing—it was pure disinterested concern for the good of the nation, which predominated over every other consideration in his mind, whenever that most merciless of all tyrants, the gout, left him the power of turning his thoughts from the racking tortures to which it had of late years condemned him ; and he discussed the public weal in his own chimney corner, with all the ardour as well as the perspicuity that had marked his parliamentary career, before the state of his health obliged him to relinquish his seat. His eldest daughter's eagerness for knowledge of every kind, and uncommonly quick and clear intellect, enabled her to follow his political and financial disquisitions to his heart's content. Fortunately

for her, she was at the same time possessed of discrimination sufficient to save her from seeking the unenviable celebrity of a female politician, and reserved her talents on that score for her father's sole use and enjoyment.

It was the arrival of this daughter that was now so anxiously expected. She had lately become a widow—her husband, colonel Delmere, had fallen in the field of heroes in the Peninsula, and left her disconsolate in the fullest sense of the word.

Her loss seemed indeed severe—he had been her first and early choice, he stood high in military fame, he adored her; their union had taken place in the short interval between his return from active service in the West Indies, and his regiment's sailing for Spain, where, in the very first action in which he was engaged, he received his death wound.

She was for some time in a state so nearly bordering upon distraction, as to

make it impossible to think of moving her ; but the assiduous attentions of an English brother officer's family, had at length so far succeeded in soothing her despair, as to enable her to undertake the voyage home, under the protection of some of the female part of it who were returning to England.

At Exeter they were to separate, and each pursue their own road ; of course it was thither that Henry and Emily were hastening to meet their sister ; and they made such good diligence, that they reached the inn before her.

After the first affectionate embraces, which she returned with some degree of warmth, she remained in the state of silent abstraction in which her companions represented her to have performed the whole voyage—neither weeping nor seeming to attend to any thing that was passing about her.

The Priory cottage, situated at one entrance of Mr. Villars's grounds, had

been fitted up for her reception ; and there she finally arrived, the veriest image of deep-rooted grief, that painter or statuary could have figured. The meeting with her parents was productive of a flood of tears, which seemed to give her some relief.—“It was seldom she could obtain it,” she said ; and a momentary gleam of interest played over her faded countenance as she looked round on those by whom she was encircled—but it did not again recur.

Emily had proposed taking up her abode with her sister for a time, but this seemed to distress her, she wished to be alone—she cherished every appearance, as she indulged every feeling, of that wretchedness to which the remainder of her life must be devoted ; arguments were of no avail, she spurned at consolation, and prided herself in withdrawing her thoughts wholly from a world, which no longer contained the only object that could have made life desirable.

It was at length agreed in the family to refrain from any attempt at argument or consolation, and to content themselves with taking it in turn to devote the day to seeing her sit

‘ With leaden eye that loved the ground,’

in weeds deeper than weeds had ever been before, far as she deemed her woe transcending every other woe.

Time passed on, but brought no healing on its wings to one so enamoured of her grief as the wretched Sophia ; a faint occasional effort to converse, in consideration of her companion, only served to prove her total inability to follow up any train of thought on ordinary topics.

Mr. Villars had not been remiss in furnishing his quota of consolation, in morning, evening, and weekly papers, reviews, political pamphlets of every sort and description—on one side of the question, that is to say ; for as to ministerial sophistry and blandishments, he was so

completely on his guard not to be led away by them, as never even to give them a fair reading ; proving himself in that respect at least a worthy pupil of Burke's school, he 'hugged his prejudices the closer for being his prejudices'\*—but he only had his share in the general mortification, of finding it all in vain ; Sophia would neither read nor listen ; she was impenetrable to every sort of interest, but what she could in one way or other connect with her affliction.

Had she not been his favourite daughter, in whom he could never discern a fault, he might have found in his heart to accuse her of some thing approaching to wilful perverseness, in thus resisting such rational means of comfort as he held out to her. As it was, however, he only declared he could not understand it.

“ *Madame n'en reviendra jamais ! c'est clair comme le jour cela,*” said Mademoi-

\* See Burke on the French revolution.

selle Victoire, a French waiting-woman, whom Mrs. Delmere had engaged in Portugal, on her own maid's objecting to continue among the "dirt and vermin, and bad living to which she was there exposed, which no mortal creature could away with," she said, "as was'nt born and bred a heathen like all them outlandish papishes." So Mrs. Harrison was sent home—and Mademoiselle Victoire, who had been left on the *Pavé* by the death of a French countess whom she served, taken in her stead.

"*Madame n'en reviendra jamais !*" she said. "*Figurez vous, Monsieur, qu'elle n'a pas jetté un pauvre coup-d'œil sur le miroir, depuis que je suis à son service ; et tous les jours ce maudit closs-cap ! et cette vilaine robe de laine ! et croiriez vous encore qu'elle s'en est fait faire une douzaine ! et qu'elle dit qu'elle n'en portera jamais d'autre ! par ma foi je n'y tiens plus ; il y a de quoi en mourir.*"



Henry, to whom this lamentation was addressed, knew that his sister's high wrought enthusiastic mind was apt to run into extremes, and trusted that Victoire's life might yet be saved by some unforeseen occurrence.

There was a member of the family too little accustomed to keep herself in the back ground, not to require a particular introduction to the reader; this was Mrs. Katharine Villars, a maiden sister of Mr. Villars, commonly known by the name of aunt Katty. She compensated a slight deficiency of intellect, by a considerable share of good humour, and eagerness to please; she was short, fat, and lived in a bustle; ever ready with her assistance where it was wanted—and where it was not; and had advice at every one's service—a commodity not very generally acceptable even when issuing from better organised heads than poor Katty's, and consequently from her rather apt to be overlooked, at which she now

and then ‘could not chuse but wonder.’ She had been fertile in enumerating the proper topics of consolation that ought to be enforced to Sophia ; but as her inspirations were seldom much to the point, her solicitude to take her turn in being with her niece was warded off (with the delicacy, however, which Mrs. Villars and her children never failed in evincing for her dependent situation) by suggesting the greater importance of her presence in the village school of industry. So she could but be busy and fancy herself of use, Katty was content.

“Here is a puzzling circumstance,” said Mrs. Villars, as she ran her eye over a letter she had received ; “my brother writes word, that a very important packet has been entrusted by poor Delmere to a friend, whose absence from England kept him ignorant of his death till very lately, and who received it with the strict injunction of delivering it into the widow’s own hands if he should fall—I suppose

no consideration whatever will induce her to admit him."

"Bless me sister! not admit him!" exclaimed aunt Katty, "why she *must* you know—and if you like, I'll step and explain it to her directly."

"Not so fast—not so fast, good Katty," cried Mr. Villars: "*must* never yet had much weight with Sophia.—I really don't know how we shall prevail upon her to see this man."

"I should think it might be accomplished," said Henry thoughtfully.

"Dear me, to be sure that's what I say," rejoined Katty, "where's the difficulty? what *must* be, *must*, we all know."

"Pho! be quiet Katt, and don't distract Hal.—Well, come, what's your device?" looking impatiently at his son.

"I think we must alarm her with the idea of something worse, and then she may perhaps submit to compound for that."

“Aye, well! that’s a very good thought! go to her then directly, and see what you can make on’t.”

“I had better think it over a little more at leisure,” returned Henry; “to-morrow will do quite as well, you know, the post don’t go out till afternoon.”

“Dear me now, it’s so odd to waste so much time in thinking! and I never could find I got any good by it in my life,” observed Katty. “I always act by impulse.”

“We might have gone near to guess as much, Katt,” retorted Mr. Villars laughing.

Charles and Laura Belmont now dropped in; they were son and daughter to Lord Belmont, whose estate adjoined to the Priory.

“We are plotting,” said Henry to Charles, “how to bring my sister Delmere to see Sir Edward Arundel:” and he told him the circumstance.

“ Singular enough !” replied Charles.  
“ I should have conceived it quite as difficult to bring Sir Edward to see your sister,—but he volunteers it, you say.”

“ It rather appears he can’t help himself—but on what ground would he be likely to object ?”

“ Have you never heard his story ? he is a professed woman-hater, ever since Miss Vyner jilted him some years ago.”

“ Well, to be sure !” said Katty, “ it’s not at all surprising any gentleman should take it amiss to be jilted ! but then to go and hate all womankind is very unfair, because really you know, Mr. Belmont, one woman may be very different from another !”

“ Was there any thing much out of the common *routine* in the business ?” Henry asked, with an arch look.

“ Why, yes—it was something more than the every day occurrence of pre-

ferring a larger fortune and higher title. It had been a long courtship—she had professed unbounded attachment—resisted a marriage her parents had pressed ; every thing was settled—lawyers at work—when the sudden death of her brother made her a considerable heiress ; upon which she immediately contrived to pick a quarrel with poor Arundel, and has since married the Duke of Deerham.”

“ And that ermine mantle,” said Mr. Villars, “ will prove a panoply of wondrous efficacy, in screening its wearer from being too harshly judged by her peers—the world is lenient to titled culprits—I have heard the Duchess of Deerham much cried up.”

“ I can’t imagine by who,” said Laura with quickness, “ for I assure you, Mr. Villars, the world was far less surprised than Sir Edward at what happened ; she was always deemed a very artful woman, and the Duke is now believed to be as

much her dupe as her lover was before. But I could find in my heart to quarrel both with you Charles and Mr. Henry Villars, for your saucy ‘every day occurrence,’ and ‘common routine;’ only that without my auxiliary, Emily, I cannot hope to make good battle against two.—Charles would not have dared in her presence to have uttered such treason against the sex. When will she emerge from her cave of melancholy, Mrs. Villars? I can never get sight of her now!”

She accompanied her accusation of Henry, with one of her most attractive smiles, but it was lavished upon an insensible, whose literary taste confined his admiration of female charms to the Helens, the Didos, the Angelicas, the Clorindas, &c. whose bloom immortal bids defiance to the power of time.—His hour was not yet come, though he asserted that whenever he should meet with the

exact counterpart of his sister Emily, he was fully prepared to fall in love. At the present moment, indeed, his mind was too much engrossed with Sophia, even to admit of the "retort courteous," with which he was in the habit of playing off Laura's attacks.

Mrs. Villars, who had been struck with the suffusion Laura's last remark had spread over the cheek of her brother, saved him from attempting an awkward defence, by saying, "We are, indeed, doubly eager to conquer Mrs. Delmere's reluctance to come amongst us again, from apprehension that Emily's spirits are giving way to the constant misery she is witnessing."

"I expect," said Henry, recovering from a fit of abstraction, "a curious interview between Sophia and Sir Edward Arundel: I suppose the only way to bring it about, will be to alarm her with an idea of the alternative being the ne-



cessity of her going up to London—She will then fly to the lesser evil.”

“A bright thought, Hal!—do act upon it forthwith!” cried Mr. Villars.

“I’ll fetch Emily home this evening, and then try what may be obtained of Sophia,” replied Henry.

## CHAP. II.

HENRY found his sister in better spirits than she had yet been since her misfortune; Emily had the art of soothing and engaging her attention without apparent premeditation.

“ I begin to look forward with some impatience,” said Henry, “ to the day that will bring my father and mother the indulgence of seeing you again amongst us, Sophia.”

“ My presence can no longer be an indulgence to any one, Henry—I only look forward to being borne with in future.”

“ Well! give us an early opportunity of displaying our powers of endurance in that way.”

“Some six months hence I may possibly summon resolution to ——”

“Mix with the world,” interrupting her: “yes, yes, *that* we depend upon, but ——”

“Never, brother—never more!—the bare sound of the word is hateful to me.”

“Then, I suppose, we must be satisfied with your confining your society to your intimate acquaintance.”

“I could not bear my intimate acquaintance to behold the wretched thing I am now become.”

“Only your old and particular friends?”

“Never more shall I emerge from the bosom of my own family.”

“Make haste into it, however, or how will you be able to muster courage for your necessary expedition to London?”

“London, Henry!” with a look of dismay.

“You know there is no escaping from the form of proving a will before a doctor of law!”

“ Oh, Henry! you are causelessly alarming me! there is no will! there can be none.”

“ You may be under a mistake, dear Sophy, a letter this day from my uncle Valcort to my mother”—he stopt on perceiving her excessive agitation.

She left the room.

“ For pity’s sake!” said Emily, “ do not pursue the subject at present, we shall lose all the ground I have been gaining.”

“ Try to pacify her then by the assurance that we will fall upon some mode of obviating the necessity of her having to appear.”

“ But as there can be no such necessity, why distress her with the idea?”

“ Do not counteract me, dear Emily! you shall know all as we go home, but let me see her again when she is more composed!”

Emily went to her sister, and in half an hour they returned to Henry.

“What struck you with such dismay, Sophia?” he asked.

“The horror of having to go to London to appear before a stranger.”

“Would you sooner forego any advantage from the will?”

“All and every advantage, rather than pay that price.—I care for nothing now, but never to be seen or heard of more.”

“Would it be equally distressing to you, if a person could come hither for the purpose?”

After a moment’s consideration, “No—not near—five minutes would suffice for that—and, five minutes of resolution I could command, if requisite.”

“Then my uncle may be informed, that if it can be so settled, you are willing.”

“Certainly—but in the case of a will, I know it cannot : so I am safe.”

“There being a will, may, however, be an assumption of mine—suppose it

were only a deposit, directed to be delivered into no hands, but your own—”

“ Then I can have no option, but to receive it, be it what it may !”

A fresh gush of tears impeded farther utterance, and Henry having carried his point, hastened home to impart his success. He informed Emily, by the way, of the circumstance, who very much doubted of her sister's abiding by her engagement, when she found who it was she must receive ; her present determination being to exclude all youthful society beyond her own relations, and so to devote herself to the memory of her husband, that no man should ever again come near enough, even to be refused.

“ Dear Emily ! is there not too much of exaggeration in all this ?”

“ Knowing Sophia, I would rather have it so, than that she should be more calm and moderate upon the subject.

She is perfectly sincere in it all, but I trust to its excess for wearing it out."

This favourable result was immediately imparted to Mr. Valacort, and the arrival of Sir Edward Arundel was daily looked for.

It had been agreed that no intimation of the person expected should be given to Sophia, till his being actually on the spot should make it too late for her to retract, and Katty received a caution to be upon her guard; as she had of late occasionally found her way to her niece, under colour of the reports she had to make to Emily respecting the school.

For two days she scrupulously adhered to the secrecy enjoined, but on the third it occurred to her that if she could persuade Sophia to make some little improvement in her dress, it would be a great point gained, so she forthwith set about suggesting the matter.

"I have been thinking, my dear niece," she began, "that you will lose all your

fine hair, by keeping it so constantly covered with that frightful close cap."

"I am very easy about the matter, dear aunt."

"But you can't go on being easy about it all your life, and you ought to look forward a little to the time, when you will want to be smart again."

Sophia shook her head.

"And really it's put on so monstrous unbecoming besides."

"Victoire puts it on as she pleases—the eyes are closed, whose approbation alone I could ever seek.—"

Tears forced their way, and she became silent.

"Why, now, I declare, my dear, to hear a woman of your sense talk so unnaturally, it's what I have no manner of patience with, for, as I say, though to be sure, losing a husband is a very sad thing, yet as it stands to reason that we must all die some day or other, but bless me!



what's the matter, you look so pale, can I get you any thing to take?"

"No, nothing, thank you!"

"Well, well, perhaps you are not in the humour to listen to reason just now, so I won't tease you—only I just came to beg a favour, which is, that you would bring a little hair forward to-morrow, and not let your cap come quite so much over your face—that's all.

"Why to-morrow?"

"On account of your being seen, you know."

"Seen!—by whom?"

"Why, have you quite forgot who you have agreed to receive?"

"Oh, true! the lawyer with the packet."

"Lawyer!—not a bit of a lawyer, I promise you; but mum for that! they shan't accuse me of betraying—"

Sophia, horror-struck with the idea of a plot to entrap her into seeing Heaven knew who! eagerly interrupting her, said with some indignation,

“ On no account would I suffer you to betray any thing to me, aunt Katharine, but I shall take it as a favour if I may immediately see my mother.”

“ To be sure you shall, as fast as I can send her to you, but only do oblige me about the cap !” she added, popping her head back into the room after she had gone out of the door.

Mrs. Villars was not slow in complying with her daughter’s request. Sophia instantly asked “ who was bringing her the packet ?” Mrs. Villars, a little distressed at the unexpected question, answered however, without hesitation, “ Sir Edward Arundel.”

“ Gracious heaven ! Sir Edward Arundel ! and was I, who have renounced all society, to have been entrapped into seeing Sir Edward Arundel ? a gay man of the world ! never, believe me, shall that succeed ! I could not have thought my brother capable of such a deception.”

“ No deception was meant, my dear

child—the communication was only delayed, that you might not brood over the painful necessity of seeing a friend of your husband's longer than could be helped ; you would have had timely notice to summon your fortitude for the trying occasion."

" I must feel obliged for the intention then, however mistaken, but be assured, my dear mother, I will never see Sir Edward Arundel."

" Not see Colonel Delmere's confidential friend ?"

" Of such intimacy of friendship, I may very reasonably doubt.—I must have heard much more of him had it existed."

" Does not the trust prove the fact ?"

" It may prove very different from what it is represented."

" But surely the injunction cannot admit of a doubt."

" At all events there can be no difference between putting it into the hands of

my mother or mine.—I entreat you, dearest mother, to save me from this distressing interview.”

“Any thing in reason, my child, to save you from distress I would do; but there is a sacredness in the last injunctions of those we love, that I never could bring myself to infringe.”

“It could not be a last injunction! Sir Edward Arundel was far distant at that dreadful moment: this packet, whatever it may be, he must long have had in his possession.”

“Have you any private reason for objecting to the sight of Sir Edward Arundel in particular?”

“O none! none, but as a man of the world—such as I will never more hold intercourse with; of himself individually I know nothing—he was seldom alluded to, though spoken of with friendship when he happened to be named; but as a gay man—a woman’s man—my heart shrinks from all such.—I conjure you,

mother, to save me from this odious interview!"

"I think, my dear Sophia, I never knew you so unreasonable before; but I will consult with your father and brother what may be done; I cannot take it upon myself."

When Mrs. Villars had talked the matter over with her husband and son, Henry was again deputed to try his powers of persuasion, but she adhered to her refusal.

"Then we must let the matter rest," said he, "till Sir Edward's arrival, and see whether he will consent to recede from the letter of the injunction."

"You can't suppose Henry, that when I so determinately resist the arguments of all those I love, I shall suffer my actions to be swayed by the opinion of a stranger!"

"It appears probable to me," said Henry thoughtfully, "that there must be some third person's fate involved in

this communication, which makes a personal interview so important."

This idea struck upon Sophia's feelings. After some struggle, and a considerable pause, she exclaimed with generous and characteristic warmth, "If there be any ground for such a supposition, I will see Sir Edward Arundel, cost me what it may."

"That is felt and spoken like yourself, my sister; and I will endeavour to ascertain how far Sir Edward may be informed upon the subject before you are again urged."

Sir Edward Arundel arrived the following day, and sent a message from the inn requesting an interview with Mr. Villars.

Mr. Villars was become so great a cripple, as seldom to be able to move about, even upon crutches; a civil apology was therefore returned, stating his inability and inviting Sir Edward to the Priory.

On no consideration would Sir Edward

have exposed himself to the hazard of encountering more females than her he was compelled to see; he therefore begged Mr. Henry Villars would do him the favour of coming to the inn.

Henry went, and found an elegant gentlemanly man, evidently under great depression of spirits; having an air of melancholy abstraction that awakened interest in the very first moment.

“ I have many excuses to make, sir,” he began, “ for giving you the trouble of coming to me; but the wretched state of my health and spirits, wholly unfits me for society; you are probably informed of the peculiar circumstance that compels me to wait upon Mrs. Delmere; may I have recourse to your goodness to pave the way for my reception? I have so entirely lost the habits of social life, that I am in danger of appearing very deficient in proper respect for the widow of my deceased friend, by confining myself, as I must do, to the literal compliance

with his injunction of delivering the packet into her own hand—for I am really unequal to conversation—and nothing short of the promise exacted by Delmere, could force me for one moment into the presence of a female.”

These last words were spoken with visible agitation.

“Nothing could be more consonant to my sister’s state of mind, than this exemption from the necessity of conversing with a stranger,” was the reply; “for be assured, sir, her reluctance to this meeting is quite as strong as your own. She professes an intention so decided to dedicate the remainder of her life to the memory of her lost husband, as not again to admit any man into her society, except those belonging to our own family. If, therefore, you could possibly be satisfied to deliver the packet into the hands of my mother in an adjoining room, who would give it to my sister in your



hearing, it would be a very material relief to Mrs. Delmere ”

“ *That*, the superscription of the packet will show I am not at liberty to do ; I am bound to act up to the letter of my promise ; but certainly this unexpected coincidence will greatly facilitate the matter to both : may I then beg of you to ascertain the hour at which it will suit Mrs. Delmere to receive me.”

This was readily undertaken, and Henry left him, as much struck with the dignity of his air and manner, as with his extreme dejection, and repeatedly expressed his surprise that such a fate should have befallen such a man.

Sophia, relieved beyond her hopes from all apprehension of being drawn into conversation, appointed the next morning for this silent meeting without farther hesitation.

If Victoire’s delight was great at hearing of the expectation of a male visitor,

what was her dismay at being ordered to add the large bonnet and black crape veil to the "*maudit* closs cap." She exhausted all her rhetoric in vain ; there was no appeal from the determination. "*Ah ! juste ciel !*" she cried, "*cela va de mal en pis !*"

At the appointed hour, Sir Edward Arundel was at the cottage door. On his name being announced, Sophia rose from her seat without looking up.

Sir Edward advanced, and with a bow, putting the packet into her hand, said in a tremulous voice, "The superscription will show you, madam, that I was compelled to this intrusion on your retirement."

The words of the superscription were these, "I adjure you by our friendship to attend to my request, to deliver this, when I am no more, into Mrs. Delmere's own hand, and no other, and when she is alone."

She took it with evident trepidation ; the sight of the hand writing overpowered all her assumed fortitude ; speech was denied her—with difficulty she curtsied her thanks—

And Sir Edward Arundel withdrew.

## CHAP. III.

IT was a considerable length of time ere Sophia could recover sufficient resolution to open the packet.

These were the contents.

‘If ever these lines are put into the hands of my Sophia, her Delmere will be no more. Should life be lent me, I may possibly bring myself to impart, what it is of importance she should know, but what I have yet wanted courage to reveal in the short period of our blissful union.’

Here the packet dropped from poor Sophia’s hands, and she sat stupified and lost in overwhelming recollections.

Fortunate was it, that she had remained alone ; or the circumstance Colonel Delmere had so cautiously sought to conceal, must have been betrayed to whoever had been present. She continued in a state of apparent insensibility, till a plentiful effusion of tears at length brought her relief—and gathering up the papers which had been scattered in their fall, she went on.

‘ A most disgraceful family occurrence has been thus far successfully kept from the world, and it is torture to me to disclose it, even to you, the beloved of my soul—in the event of my death, however, you must be informed, for reasons which will soon be apparent to you.

‘ I have a sister—Oh God ! how shall I tell you that infamy attaches to her name !

‘ Placed at a boarding-school on the death of my mother, and afterwards under the care of an ill chosen French governess, her beauty and accomplishments

made her the pride of our family. Various and splendid overtures of marriage were made to her, but she rejected them all. Love for a villain had taken possession of her mind ; Frank Arundel, (cousin to the friend to whom I entrust this deposit, but every way unworthy of the connexion) with a handsome person, and talents superficial as her own, captivated her light affections at a ball. He laughed at matrimony ; Almeria had no principles to oppose to his wit and art, and soon became his victim.

‘ The consequences may be foreseen ; when the infatuated girl became sensible of the necessity for concealment, she had recourse to her governess, an adept at intrigue, who having *emigré* relations in the north of England, suggested the expedient of a visit to them, and easily obtained my father’s permission for Almeria to accompany her. There she was introduced by a feigned name, and her husband said to be abroad ; the distance

between Hampshire and Cumberland seemed a security against detection.

‘ Almeria, however, imprudently informed her lover of the plan, who soon followed her, and obtained admission in the family as the husband’s brother.

‘ Just at that period my brother William returned from a cruize ; in his way to London he met with an old messmate who induced him to spend a day at his house on the border of one of the lakes ; in the course of conversation they adverted to their school-fellow Frank Arundel, and William’s friend said, he had been seen lounging about in that neighbourhood, probably engaged in some amour, and they agreed by way of frolic, to give him the fright of a detection, by assuming the character of relations of the girl’s ; they succeeded, but too well ; I cannot enter into the cursed particulars. Suffice it to say, that William, on discovering his sister, challenged her seducer.

‘ They were both wounded—William severely, Arundel mortally.

‘ Almeria was thrown into premature labour, but the infant lived—and lives—and it is solicitude for the future fate of this poor child, which has drawn from me all this odious detail. To you, my Sophia, I look for the protection and care of her; but how to take the charge without betraying the infamous secret, must remain for your affectionate ingenuity to devise.

‘ The few remaining sad particulars necessary to be told, are, that the duel transpired, but not its cause. Arundel died—William was removed to London for the best surgical assistance, and wrote me the horrid details as soon as he was able to hold a pen.—I need not dwell upon my feelings. I applied for leave of absence, determined to use my utmost influence with my father, to part with the Hampshire estate, that Almeria’s



removal from that neighbourhood might be accounted for without giving rise to suspicion.

‘ I found my father dangerously ill with spasms brought on by the cruel intelligence, and he died.

‘ I had come with the full purpose to see Almeria, and endeavour to bring her to a sense of her misconduct, or, if I failed, to make her parting with the child a condition of the provision to be allotted to her ; but she had withdrawn from the scene of her detection and sufferings, and concealed her retreat. In the apprehension of her being reduced to absolute want, I was compelled, however reluctant, to entrust the fatal business to Sir Edward Arundel, and leave funds in his hands for her supply, whenever he might be able to discover her abode. After months of fruitless inquiry, he heard of her by an unlooked for chance, just as he was also ordered abroad, and could therefore only leave directions with his banker to make

quarterly remittances to her by her assumed name, and write me word of what he had done.

‘ I wrote to her ; in her answer she bewailed her errors, and their dreadful consequences, but earnestly entreated to be allowed to remain in the obscurity to which she had condemned herself, stating at the same time, that her recovery had been attended with circumstances so unfavourable, owing to the misery she had endured, as to have brought on complaints that must ere long prove fatal.

‘ I could do nothing farther till my return, and you may recollect that I then talked of a necessary journey into the north, before the completion of our marriage ; but her dread of the meeting caused her again to remove, and appoint a circuitous mode of remitting her annuity. She spoke of her child, as if she lived but in its sight, and yet with the want of consideration that has marked

every action of her life : she gave no clue by which to find it, when the death of the parent should leave the poor infant destitute of all protection.

‘ On our departure for Portugal, I was once more obliged to have recourse to Sir Edward, whose arrival was daily expected, and to whom alone I could confide this important packet, with the certainty of its safely reaching your hands in the event of my death, and securing your protection for the unhappy little girl whenever the wretched mother shall be no more.’

It may be supposed that much time and many tears went to the perusal of this distressing narrative. Of all tasks that could have been imposed upon the open-hearted, sincere, and generous Sophia, that of *inventing a subterfuge* was the most impracticable.

In revolving and reflecting upon the circumstances which she was not very

speedily able to do with any degree of clearness, the only resource that offered itself to her perplexed mind, was to consult Sir Edward Arundel, a measure which must involve a necessity of farther intercourse.

Sickening thought!—yet unavoidable!—every consideration of honour and delicacy, with respect to Delmere, precluded her imparting the contents of the packet to any third person whatever. The very precautions he had taken to guard the knowledge of them, even from her own family, imperiously pointed out the line of conduct he expected from her: still, towards this, what could she possibly do? could she write? enter into correspondence with a stranger!—the danger besides of writing upon so confidential a subject!—an interview was the only alternative—and this might afford the means of discussing at once all that was necessary, and have done

with it. A strange step too, for her to take! but Sir Edward must himself be aware it was unavoidable; and the respectful distance of his manner—the considerate feeling he had evinced for her ungovernable emotion, softened the embarrassment in some degree;—her husband's high opinion of him too—their long friendship—he was, in short, the only person she could have brought herself to see again; and after all, there was no other resource.—

So she sent for her brother.

She informed him that the contents of the packet could not be imparted even to him; but that they involved the absolute necessity of her again seeing Sir Edward Arundel.

Henry was all astonishment; there was an eagerness in her manner which nothing had yet excited.

“ I apprehend he must by this time be gone.” He replied.

“ My dear brother, lose no time to ascertain whether he be or not—it is of the utmost importance I should see him.”

Henry's curiosity was extraordinarily raised, but he hastened to make the inquiry she desired.

## CHAP. IV.

SIR Edward Arundel's nerves were in so shattered and irritable a state, that the agitation of having been forced into the presence of a woman, had greatly disordered him ; he had been in a slight degree a "*malade imaginaire*," and fancied himself unfit to travel that day. Having shut himself up, therefore, with orders not to be disturbed, he was a good deal surprised, and not very well pleased, when his servant brought up the name of Mr. Henry Villars, with an earnest request to be admitted.

Sir Edward could frame no valid excuse, and the visitor was shown up.

Henry apologised for an intrusion to which he was compelled, he said, by his sister's earnest wish for another interview.

Sir Edward looked aghast.

"She said," continued Henry, "the contents of the packet made it of the utmost importance."

"I am extremely unwell, Mr. Villars.—I am shocked at my apparent rudeness to Mrs. Delmere—but if she knew the torture I endure in female society—and indeed in all society—if it were possible to commit to writing—"

"I am quite sure," interrupted Henry, "there must be some cogent reason against writing for my sister to have so far conquered her own reluctance to society of every kind, and more particularly (you may recollect, sir, I mentioned it to you) to that of men, as to have proposed an interview—there seems



to be something in the packet she has received from you that strangely unhinges her; she spoke with an earnestness no other subject has yet awakened since poor Delmere's death."

The import of the packet now indeed first recurred to Sir Edward's recollection, for hitherto he had solely dwelt upon the miserable necessity of having to deliver it. His mind had of late been so engrossed by his own unhappiness, that he had not reflected upon the subsequent intercourse which the nature of the contents might produce. Instantly aware there could be no escape from this vexatious result, he civilly apologised for his present inability, but begged to assure Mrs. Delmere he would obey her commands the following morning.

He felt that he wanted the intervening time to obtain composure sufficient to go through a consultation, which he foresaw must run into length. But as he reflected upon the matter more at lei-

sure, he also came to feel that the retired dignity of Mrs. Delmere's deportment was calculated to inspire respect, although she was a female ; she had besides so effectually concealed herself from him, that he must acquit her at least of vanity, for he had always heard she was very handsome. Her whole soul's being given up to grief too, so many months after Delmere's death, showed that there were still such things as faith and affection in woman.—Upon the whole, he found himself in a better state of preparation for this undesirable visit than he could have expected, and began to look forward to the next morning with some degree of calmness.

Sophia, on the other hand, though she could not rejoice in the unhappiness which caused his reluctance to female society, yet experienced considerable relief in the security it afforded her against either flattery or unwelcome assiduities ; and notwithstanding that she passed a

sleepless night in revolving the topics she had to discuss, she arose with far less dread of the interview than she could have imagined.

Meanwhile, Henry's surprising report of a second interview requested by Sophia, diffused much satisfaction at the Priory.

At an early hour the next day, Sir Edward Arundel waited upon Mrs. Delmere.

"You would scarcely be surprised, I imagine, sir," she began, "at the message I found myself compelled to send by my brother; as I have every reason to suppose you acquainted with the contents of the packet entrusted to you."

"With one circumstance of it, but too well indeed, madam; Mr. Arundel was unfortunately my near relation."

"You were commissioned I find to forward the means of subsistence to his unhappy victim."

"My being suddenly ordered abroad,

obliged me to leave the care of the remittances to my banker, but I find they have been duly attended to."

" May I inquire, sir, whether funds were deposited for the purpose?—So near a relation of—of—" the words stuck in her throat.

" Funds were deposited to the amount of the annuity," he hastily interrupted, to save her distress.

" You probably know her present abode, and can point out the means of communication with her."

" She has hitherto taken successful pains to conceal it, by the circuitous mode she has adopted for the receipt of her annuity ; her signature, however, is regularly received, which proves her to be still in existence, though from the feeble unsteady characters of the last, I should conceive the final close to be at hand."

" And is there no practicable method of tracing her actual residence?"

Sir Edward considered.

She went on, "Penitence so sincere and lasting is entitled to great commiseration. I have done with the world—and with society—but to the claims of misfortune I cannot be insensible. I would instantly go to her, if I knew where to find her."

Sir Edward, for the first time, raised his eyes to her face—it was uncovered. In the agitation of the expected interview, she had forgotten her bonnet and veil, and most carefully had Victoire kept them out of sight.

There was something indescribably affecting in the contrast of the habitual depression grief had stamped on her countenance, and the glow with which the benevolent feeling she had just expressed for a moment irradiated it; the effect upon Sir Edward was as instantaneous, but not so brief; emerging at once from the dry cold manner in which he had thus far answered her, he said with animation, "I will not rest till I

have discovered her retreat, and you shall be informed of it without delay."

A slight bow of acknowledgment was all the reply.

After a pause, she resumed, "There is another circumstance, sir, of too delicate a nature to be committed to paper, which rendered a personal interview indispensable. I must have recourse to your advice as to the colour to be given to my adoption of the child; I am debarred from imparting this distressing business to my own family, and consequently from consulting with them upon it; but adopt her I certainly shall, whatever difficulty may attend the measure."

"Have you well considered, madam?"

"A *duty*," interrupting him with quickness, "can admit of no consideration, but of the best means to accomplish it; and the difficulty here, lies only in the danger of betraying what it is so important to conceal."

"Will you allow me, madam, a few

hours to think over what may be done, and give me leave to wait upon you in the evening, to impart the result?"

"It appears to me, sir, that it is unnecessary to give you that farther trouble at present—you are so good as to undertake to discover her abode, which may be safely imparted to me, under cover to my brother; I will immediately go to her, and according to the state of health in which I find her, I may be enabled to form a judgment of the period when her release shall consign the child to my care; it will then be time enough for me to learn what may have occurred to you as to the most unsuspecting mode of introducing her into my family."

"I beg pardon for my precipitation," he said, with a sense of mortification he could not very well account for. "I conceived you wished to take immediate charge of the child."

"And rob the unhappy woman of her only remaining comfort?—O no!"

“ Her errors you do not then consider as a dangerous example to her daughter, should her life be prolonged ?”

“ Her contrition and sufferings might rather convert them into warnings ; at all events it is not by me that her calamity shall be increased—but I am now, sir, trespassing unnecessarily upon your time—with a journey on hand, you must wish to be relieved.”

Sir Edward was not just then conscious of any such wish, but he believed she felt it, and immediately took his leave.

Indeed, Sophia, who had exerted herself to the utmost, could but rejoice the trying task was over ; though she acknowledged to herself that Sir Edward was not to be classed with mere men of the world ; it was evident also, that misanthropy had not dried up the source of benevolence in him ; and his general dislike to female society, stamped him the only man with whom she could bear



to foresee the necessity of holding farther intercourse.

Much of the trouble Sir Edward Arundel had proposed taking to discover the abode of Mrs. Wilson (as she chose to call herself), was unexpectedly saved by receiving information at his banker's, that a Mr. Jones had just been there, and brought a letter from her, by which he was appointed to receive the annuity for her in future. This letter was accompanied by one addressed to Sir Edward Arundel, but directed not to be delivered to him till after Mrs. Wilson's death.

To Mr. Jones, Sir Edward immediately repaired, and readily obtained the information he wanted.

Mr. Jones was nearly related to the person in whose neighbourhood Mrs. Wilson had lived ever since her quitting Cumberland. He reported her to be in the last stage of a decline ; said that on receiving news of Colonel Delmere's death, she had written the letter to Sir

Edward, and entrusted him with the delivery of it into the banker's hands. He believed it to relate wholly to her child, about whose fate she seemed to suffer considerable anxiety. He imagined it was the interest he had expressed for her forlorn and calamitous situation that had occasioned her placing this confidence in him.

Sir Edward now calling to mind his friendship for Delmere, as well as his own affinity to the child, formed the desperate resolution of encountering one female more. He would go himself to the unhappy woman, and soften her dying moments, by reporting the interest expressed by Mrs. Delmere for the little girl, and bearing testimony to the very respectable protection in which she would be placed with her.

He felt himself unaccountably roused to action, and could scarce help smiling when he recollected the difficulty he had found to bring himself into the presence

of Mrs. Delmere, and compared it with the alacrity with which he was now volunteering a similar step.—He was half tempted to allow that Mrs. Delmere might have some share in producing this change—she certainly had somewhat shaken the inveteracy of his prejudice against the sex, by showing him that there actually existed a woman capable of strong attachment and above coquetry. As to her he was now about to see, he merely considered her as a suffering human being, and as such entitled to the commiseration of every benevolent mind. He hoped too, that an interview with her might bring to light something that would serve as a plausible cover to the introduction of the child into Mrs. Delmere's family.

Amidst these and various other cogitations upon the subject, he reached the abode of Mrs. Wilson, and gained admittance ; but found her in so reduced and weak a state, that it was but very gradually he could unfold his purpose, and at

different, and sometimes distant intervals he could ascertain all the particulars it was so important to know ; her excessive agitation in the first instance, having brought on a paroxysm of such alarming violence, as to give reason to apprehend it might snap the attenuated thread, by which her life still hung ; and every subsequent meeting in a degree renewed the danger.

He had, however, the real enjoyment of perceiving that he soothed and comforted her lacerated mind by the fair prospect he held out for her child. The circumstances he gathered from her were briefly these.—

The duel had taken place at the hour when labourers usually leave off work ; a sufficient number of them were soon brought together by the report of the pistols, to take charge of conveying the wounded men to different farm-houses, till medical aid could be obtained. Doctor Prior, the rector of the parish,

happened to pass as Frank Arundel was carrying into a house, in a state of insensibility: perceiving him to be a gentleman, and conceiving that better accommodation and greater quiet might be requisite than the farmer's large family of children could admit of his affording to the wounded man, he benevolently ordered him to be taken to the parsonage, which was near at hand: proper applications soon restored animation, but the surgeon who had been called in gave no hopes of recovery.

The worthy divine, judging it highly important to acquaint the sufferer with his real situation, took upon himself the painful task, and performed it with all the gentleness and feeling the occasion required. It threw the dying man into a horrible state of despondency; his wailings and strong expressions of remorse clearly betrayed that his conscience was burthened with even more than the making up of his own dreadful account.

Doctor Prior, in the true spirit of his calling, was endeavouring to calm his mind, and bring it into a state to benefit by religious consolations, when Almeria frantically rushed into the room, in defiance of all Mrs. Prior's attempts to keep her back : her ungovernable grief soon made manifest all that was before suspected.

She was with much difficulty induced to leave the apartment, where her appearance had considerably increased the dangerous symptoms of the patient. The good doctor used all his rhetoric to urge Arundel to the only reparation in his power, by an immediate union with the hapless girl ; the necessary means were instantly resorted to, and the wretched man had at least one load less upon his guilty mind, in the reflection that his child would not come into the world with disgrace attached to its name.

Almeria at that time cared little about herself, one way or other ; her faculties were all absorbed in grief. Arundel did

not survive their marriage many days, and the shock of his death accelerated the birth of the child ; but it was not till the little Agatha was some weeks old, that the joint endeavours of the worthy couple who had taken her under their roof, could bring Almeria to a just sense of her own misconduct. When at length, however, her eyes were opened to it, she felt the disgrace so strongly, that she voluntarily inflicted upon herself the atoning penance of letting the stigma rest upon her during life, by leaving her family in ignorance of her actual marriage, and concealing herself wholly from them. Doctor Prior remonstrated in the most forcible manner against this concealment, but in vain ; she was inflexible from the fear, as she told Sir Edward, that her child would be taken from her ; and the good man knowing nothing of either of the families, could devise no mode of counteracting her determination.

A longer continuance of his paternal

admonitions, might possibly have brought her to a more proper sense of what she owed to her family ; but in the dread of being discovered, she became impatient for removal to some place of greater privacy, and fixed upon Wales. Finding he could not dissuade her from her purpose, he kindly recommended her to the care and attentions of a married sister, in the vale of Festiniog. Here she gave herself up to a state of despondency, from which she was never drawn, but by the caresses of her infant ; she continued however to drag on her miserable existence for more years than could have been expected, considering the wretched state of her health ever since its birth.

Whether the various conferences with Sir Edward Arundel, however consoling, might not from their agitating nature have hastened the period of her fate, there is no saying ; but on the very morning he had fixed for his departure she expired. He now of course delayed it till he could



see proper care taken of her remains ; and sent off the little Agatha with her maid a day's journey on the road, to await his joining them. The child's legitimate claim to the name of Arundel, having at once removed all the difficulty of her introduction into Mrs. Delmere's family.

Colonel Delmere's ignorance of the actual marriage arose from his brother's having been immediately taken to his friend's house at some distance from the parsonage ; and the daily inquiries being confined to the state of Arundel's wound, the whole matrimonial transaction had been kept as secret as was at the time intended : and when the emigré family to whom Almeria had first gone, were applied to for information, they indignantly disclaimed all farther knowledge of her, having quarrelled with their relation for the deceit put upon them ; who, on her part, had disappeared from the moment of the discovery.

## CHAP. V.

SIR Edward made no unnecessary delays in proceeding with his little charge into Hampshire ; and having deposited her in the inn at his last stage, he proceeded alone to Hurstbourne, having settled it in his own mind that a woman of true feeling was such a phenomenon, she deserved the consideration of being spared from the effects of sudden surprise.

He imparted, with a little well-judged circumlocution, the result of his journey.

The circumstance of the marriage was so much beyond Sophia's hopes, and

smoothed down so many difficulties, as to awaken a sense of more genuine satisfaction than she had experienced since her loss ; and a sweet, expressive, though melancholy smile accompanied her acknowledgment for the trouble he had taken.

This smile strangely affected him.

The respect with which she had inspired him in the former visits had overcome his repugnance to her society ; he was inclined to consider her as a being wholly distinct from the sex he had fore-sworn. She was his friend's disconsolate relict—renouncing the world for his sake—careless of her claims to admiration—alive only to grief and to benevolence.—What beauty of intellect had he not traced in those woe-worn features!—and whilst he fixed his eyes upon them during his narrative, a thought had crossed his mind, whether smiles could ever have become them half so well!—The smile therefore which now broke through her

downcast pensive expression, as she raised her head to speak, took him so unawares that it altogether disconcerted him—he remained a moment at a loss for what he was going to say.

Sophia had not lifted her eyes to his face, and he recovered his self-possession. He went on to inform her of Almeria's death—she interrupted him in eager solicitude for the child. “She wished not to lose an instant in sending a trusty person for her.”

He had real pleasure in telling her the child was already within reach.

Sophia now gave him a look of gratitude and pleased surprise. This was the first time her eyes had rested upon his countenance—it bespoke so much soul, as to set her immediately at ease, under the sense of obligation.

He begged leave to go for his little charge, and to be allowed to deposit her himself in the hands of her aunt. After all the trouble he had taken, there was

no refusing what he seemed to request as a gratification.

During his absence, Sophia, imparted at the Priory what had occurred. There remained no call for device or concealment. Almeria Delmere had been clandestinely married to Mr. Francis Arundel, who lost his life in a duel; the family had never forgiven her; she had languished in ill health and retirement ever since, and was lately dead, leaving an unprotected orphan, which Sophia meant to adopt.

This was told and publicly repeated. But to her father and mother, Henry and Emily, she accounted for the secrecy so strictly enjoined, by Colonel Delmere's ignorance of the marriage ceremony having actually taken place.

Sophia's thoughts were now for the first time again necessarily drawn into worldly concerns; it occurred to her, that Sir Edward's return would be at the dinner hour, and that she could not well

avoid asking him ; she therefore appointed Henry to do the honours of her table to him ; and next came the consideration how best to accommodate Agatha and her maid in the cottage.

All this was too new not to be attended with a little hurry of spirits, which made her more than usually susceptible of inconvenience, from the heat of the weather. “ Do put this cap rather more off my face, Victoire,” she said, as her maid set about dressing her ; “ it heats me so intolerably.” The usual period of weeds had long been past, but she had pertinaciously adhered to the close cap.

“ *Ah ! le ciel en soit loué !*” exclaimed Victoire, and she contrived to pull forward a little hair as she adjusted the cap ; not being able, however, to please herself in putting it on in a way so different from that for which it was intended, she held the looking-glass for her lady’s opinion. “ Madame must look handsome any way,” she said ; “ but this cap will disgrace my *savoir-faire*.”

“ I can’t possibly care about it, so I does but feel more comfortable,” Sophia replied, declining to look.

“ Can I fall upon no means of attracting your eye to the glass, without betraying my purpose !” exclaimed Victoire ; “ I really did wish that you should observe the alteration in your looks before it alarms your friends.”

“ Am I really so much altered ?”

“ Indeed I can’t help thinking so.”

“ Let me see the glass then ?”

Victoire handed the glass to her—the wily waiting-woman had gained her point ; Sophia was not very alarmingly altered, but she had always been an elegant dresser, and the cap as it was now put on looked so insufferably awkward, that it offended her eye.

“ I see no particular alteration in my looks ; but you certainly have made an intolerable fright of my head, Victoire—put me on the mob you have been wanting me to wear.”

Victoire was triumphant, and the instant she had finished her lady's toilette, flew to the Priory to impart the glad tidings.

Katty exulted in the success of her interference taking the conquest over the close cap wholly to herself, and thence proceeded to anticipate such wonderful results as certainly were not very obvious to those more prone to combine probability with their conjectures.

Agatha Arundel's first appearance at the cottage was not prepossessing; tall for her age, and awkwardly dressed—shy—frightened—clinging close to the maid; her head hanging down, sucking her own thumb, and scowling from under her dark locks at Sophia and Henry, (who had come at his sister's bidding to receive Sir Edward). Every word addressed to her, instead of producing an answer, made her draw a little farther back till she got quite behind Winny, who on her part, by way of encouragement, went on saying, “ Oh fie! missy tear! how can you pe-



have so pat? 'tis shame! look up and speak, if not your aunt will whip—I must call plack man take you away.”

At every fresh threat the poor child's terror increased, till she at length burst into a violent passion of tears, hiding her face in Winny's petticoat.

“There are no black men to frighten children in this country,” said Henry; “take her into the garden to see the flowers, and let her feed the ducks and chickens with this bit of bread; she will soon see there is nobody here that will hurt her.”

Winny obeyed.

“Rather an inauspicious beginning!” said Henry, looking after them.

Sophia, though much overcome by the scene, replied, “Poor thing! spoilt by her mother, I dare say, and mis-managed by her maid; I must expect to have some trouble with her; but I could perceive an intelligent eye through her scowl, and if her temper be not injured, she will

soon do very well. I have nothing now to draw off my attention from her."

Dinner passed satisfactorily enough, though Sophia's spirits were evidently hurried; but she forced herself to converse, and every word she uttered heightened Sir Edward's opinion of her understanding. The appearance of coffee put him in mind that his visit drew towards a close; he hastily turned his thoughts to the possibility of striking out some mode of making himself farther useful with respect to his young cousin; and it luckily occurred to him, that it would now be necessary to inform his uncle of the existence of this grandchild; "which with Mrs. Delmere's permission he would take upon himself, and acquaint her with the result."

This could admit of no objection, and Sir Edward took his leave.

Sophia then made another attempt to draw her little charge into talk, but it would not yet do—so she gave up the

point, leaving her to the salutary effects of a night's rest, and greater familiarity with the animals and objects about her.

The report Henry had to make at the Priory, of Agatha's introduction, created some alarm for the task Sophia had undertaken; but Katty made very light of the matter indeed.

“If my niece Delmere will but be guided by me,” she said, “I'll answer for her being soon got into order—nothing can be so easy—her mother has been too sparing of the rod, that's all; and when once she becomes sufficiently acquainted with old father birch, my niece's spirits need not be worn to death with teaching her, for I can undertake her catechism, and Mamosel may instruct her in French grammar, and all the rest will follow of course.”

This easy mode of settling the affair, was only answered by a good-humoured smile, which Katty pleased herself by

construing into a smile of approbation, and there it ended.

The next morning proved of better promise, with respect to Agatha. Winny having been instructed to refrain from threats, had recourse to her usual alternative, a bribe; strawberries and milk appeared upon her aunt's breakfast table, and the sight of them lightened up the little girl's countenance, to an expression that convinced Sophia there was at least no deficiency of intelligence in her. A few words of gentle kindness soon brought her to agree to let Winny go to her own breakfast, and remain alone with her aunt; and as long as the strawberries lasted, all went on well; but the instant she had made an end of them, she became importunate for Winny to take her back to her mamma.

The task of informing the child of her mother's death, had been purposely reserved for Mrs. Delmere, who chose to delay it for some days.

“Do you love your mamma very much?”

“Yes.”

“When you were at home, did you like better to stay with her, than with Winny?”

“I like to stay with mamma and with Winny, and I want to go to mamma now.”

“Well, but let Winny finish her breakfast first; she don’t eat so quick as you do; and let us talk a little more about mamma; was she not very sick when you left her?”

“Yes.”

“And could she let you play about and make a noise when she was sick?”

“No; I always go to Winny to play with me—but I like mamma to kiss and coax me, and tell Winny to give me cake and plums.”

“Now if Winny stays and plays with you here, and takes you to gather currants

in my garden, won't you like to stay with me till mamma gets better?"

"Will she let me make a noise then, and not be angry, when she is quite well?"

"When people are quite well they don't so much mind noise."

"Are you quite well? and will you let me make a noise?"

"Yes, when I can't find any better way to please you."

"Then I'll stay here, for I do like to make a noise, and I want to go and see if Winny has done breakfast."

"You shall presently—look here, do you know what bird this is?" opening a volume of Bewick.

This attracted and kept her quiet a little longer; her aunt then thinking she had gained as much ground as could be expected at first, gave way to her reiterated demand of going to her maid.

This little specimen will suffice to show, that Sophia was at home in the manage-

ment of children. Exertion of every kind was, however, so new to her, that she somewhat distrusted her own perseverance ; but knowing she had help at hand at the Priory, set her mind at ease, nor was it long ere she became sensible of the power of useful occupation to subdue grief. This was matter of surprise : she had expected, in taking charge of Agatha, to experience a constant struggle between her feelings and her duty, wholly unconscious of the invigorating support ever arising from an active and well directed pursuit.

Grief certainly did not fail to recover its hold, when she sat listlessly down to give way to it ; but intervals of inaction can neither be long nor frequent with those who have the education of a child at heart ; and after a time, Sophia could not but acknowledge to herself, that instead of grief intruding upon her every thought, she not unfrequently had almost to look for it. There however it was—

deep-rooted in her heart's core—the image of her Delmere, never to be obliterated ; but now softened into a soothing melancholy, which admitted of intercourse with her own family, and might be cherished there ; but to the domestic circle she resolutely insisted upon confining herself—not even the Belmonts could obtain an exemption.

Agatha's strong family likeness to Delmere, quickly ripened Sophia's goodwill into extreme affection for her ; and a very few days had been sufficient to reconcile the child perfectly to her new situation, and set her thoughts so completely at rest, with regard to her mother, as to remove all difficulty in the communication of her death, upon which she had quietly observed, “ Well, if you say dear mamma is gone to be happy, so is Aggy too, with dear aunty ! ” A little more sensibility might have pleased dear aunty better, but at that joyous age, present pleasure is all in all.



## CHAP. VI.

It cannot be expected, that Sir Edward Arundel's visits, so repeated, and wholly confined to the cottage, should escape the observation of the neighbourhood; in Katty's daily intercourse with the village, she was assailed on all hands upon the subject. She "wished people would be satisfied to mind their own business." "She did not know what concern anybody had with, who visited at the cottage, or for what purpose!"

This made the matter very clear. Mrs. Katharine Villars herself did not attempt to deny it, so there could be no doubt

but the marriage was to take place—and when Agatha appeared by the name of Arundel, the thing was beyond all dispute. “Madam Delmere was already taking charge of Sir Edward’s natural daughter.”

How all this was canvassed and commented on, may so readily be imagined as to make it not worth detailing; the only remarkable circumstance was the dead silence of the communicative Katty, upon the subject at the Priory; but this was the result of mature deliberation. She well knew that if these reports should reach Sophia, or even the Priory, there would be an end of the whole affair, and all her anticipations and prognostications would be knocked on the head at once: so she very judiciously put a seal upon her own lips; but recollecting, at the same time, that servants might betray what she wished concealed, she thought it would be well to put them on their guard also. So she told them, “If they

should hear any idle reports in the village, about Sir Edward Arundel and Mrs. Delmere, not to take any notice of it to the family, as it would vex Mrs. Delmere to have the thing talked of, when she was but just leaving off her weeds.”

The servants delighted to be thus entrusted, as they considered it, with the secret, were faithful to the injunction of silence to the heads of the family, and contented themselves with settling the how, and the when, amongst one another.

At Belmont Park, however, no such discretion was enjoined; the house-keeper first brought the news from the village to Laura's maid, who lost no time in imparting it to her lady, as she was dressing her; and Laura went full of it into the drawing room, where she found her father and brother.

“Here's news!” she exclaimed, “who could have thought that this eternal affliction of Mrs. Delmere's—this unheard of woe!—these desperate resolves

of never-ending seclusion, should all have evaporated and ‘made themselves air,’ upon the very first appearance of a smart man!”

“What can you mean, Laura?” asked her brother.

“The disconsolate of the cottage! going to be married to Sir Edward Arundel, that’s all!”

“Impossible!” cried Charles.

“Stavely had it from one of the Priory servants, or I should not give credit to it myself,” she replied.

“Surely, Laura, it cannot be true!” said Charles.

“Where is the wonder pray?—in female instability?” Lord Belmont drily asked.

“It cannot be true!” reiterated Charles: “besides, you know Sir Edward’s repugnance to female society, on the other hand, my Lord!” turning to his father.

“You are very young indeed, my dear

Charles, for a man of five-and-twenty!" was the reply.

"Is it being very young to expect people to act consistently?"

"Very!—when it is contrary to their interest, or their inclination."

"That would go near to banish consistency from the world, I think."

"And when you have lived as long in the world as I have done, you will cease to look for it," Lord Belmont coolly said.

Warm-hearted and unsuspecting himself, Charles was frequently distressed at the cold selfish system and opinions of a thorough-paced time-server, such as his father had become; for in early life Lord Belmont too had thought and felt as unperverted youth is prone to do; but disappointments of various kinds had made him cynical. One friend of his early days had robbed him of his mistress; another had, before he came to his title, by misrepresentation, jostled him

out of his seat in Parliament ; a third had plundered him at play when flushed with wine : and instead of ascribing these misfortunes to their true cause, his own choice of unprincipled companions, he hardened his mind into a disbelief of all virtue and disinterestedness.

The title and estate which had devolved to him from an uncle, was clogged with the condition of his marrying his cousin, in failure of which he was to forfeit all the unentailed part of the property ; but the condition was no sort of distress to him ; he conformed to it with the same indifference, as if so much live stock had been annexed to the estate. And Lady Belmont, on her part, had given him her hand with all the readiness and regard to propriety with which she would have given it to any other peer her father might have seen fit to select. Of her ladyship, there is little more to be said, than that she was born and bred a woman of fashion, and secured by nature

from those dangerous appendages, beauty and talent; of course she thought ‘as all the world thinks,’ and acted ‘as all the world acts;’ and in return for this unqualified conformity to its laws and opinions, ‘all the world’ was unanimous in deeming her an extremely correct and well-bred woman.

With parents such as these, it was rather matter of wonder, that Charles Belmont should retain so much soul, than that Laura should be found wanting; for although the guileless Emily took her for what she professed herself, and believed in her friendship, she was in fact ‘far other than her seeming.’ There was a considerable difference of years between her and her brother; she was, as Texier, in his inimitable readings, described Cidalise, ‘*Une jeune demoiselle de dixhuit à trente cinq ans,*’ who would have been modestly inclined to rate her claim low in that scale, but for a certain wicked book of reference which cruelly deprives

the female nobility of a privilege the (in this one instance at least) *happier* plebeians so freely indulge in; that of remaining awhile stationary at the age that best suits their fancy. But if Laura could not arrest the progress of time, she was wondrous expert at obliterating the print of his foot: an adept in the most recondite mysteries of the toilet, with merely a good figure, and a very moderate share of beauty, she had succeeded in establishing herself a distinguished belle; and continued a blooming perennial, amid the succession of annual beauties that live their little day, and fade from notice. Her manners varied with her society; attractive or insolent, as might suit the occasion: at the Priory, all conformity and sweetness: her object of course was Henry—not merely from her insatiable avidity for conquest, but with calculating prudence to ensure a *corps de reserve*. Having learnt from sad experience, that



“ ’Tis not in mortals to command success,”

she judged it expedient to guard against the last melancholy result of continued failure in her more aspiring aims, by having this snug resource to fly to at her utmost need.

A pic nic fête champêtre had been proposed by a neighbouring family, in which the Belmonts and the Villars’s agreed to join. It was settled that the young people should ride; Emily’s horse having fallen lame, Charles Belmont prevailed upon her to mount a mare of his that was remarkably quiet. The party set out in high spirits; one of the servants, who went forward to open a gate, rode a mettlesome animal, which became unruly at his companion’s passing him; the gate slipped from the man’s hand at the moment Emily was going through it, and fell against her mare, who in her fright set forth at full speed, and all Emily’s efforts to check her proved in-

effectual ; Charles aware of her danger, leaped a gate, and reached the spot he saw the mare making for, just in time to turn her into the hedge, by which he succeeded in stopping her, but the sudden jirk threw Emily off.'

She was stunned, but not hurt, and wished to make light of her fall, but the tremour and agitation of Charles exceeded all bounds, and betrayed feelings of which he had hitherto scarce himself suspected the extent—they did not escape Emily's notice ; the other gentlemen of the party were importunate for her remounting immediately, asserting that she would never recover courage to get on a horse's back again, if she did not ; but Charles vehemently opposed it ; denouncing vengeance against the poor animal, and insisted upon taking Emily into a farm-house close by, to recover from her fright, and await the coming up of the barouche, which was

only occupied by Lady Belmont and Katty.

Emily was in fact very little frightened, but finding that Charles was determined to transfer all his own terrors to her, she hoped by acquiescence to ward off the observation of her companions ; so she suffered him to lead her into the house, urging him at the same time to remount his own horse, and proceed with the rest—but in vain ; he would not stir till he had seen her safely deposited in the barouche. The other equestrians being satisfied that she was unhurt, and in good hands, now gave the reins to their steeds, and were soon out of sight.

The time that elapsed before the arrival of the barouche was not unprofitably spent by Charles. The farmer's wife had shown her guests into a parlour, and busied herself in collecting every restorative she could think of for Emily, and, indeed, for her companion,

who, as the good woman remarked, seemed a good deal the worst of the two; for the little intervals of her absence gave opportunity for such unequivocal, though unpremeditated testimony of deep interest, as produced a striking contrast in the suffusion that spread itself over Emily's modest cheek, and the tremulous pallidness of Charles. The genuine maidenly reserve which kept her silent, had however nothing repulsive in it; her gentle downcast looks evinced the high place he held in her esteem:—could love desire a better foundation? Charles became conscious of all he owed to this *fortunate* accident, as he could not now but deem it. Months might have elapsed in the common course of things, before they could have understood each other so well. And by the time the carriage came in sight, they both appeared with looks of heartfelt satisfaction, which might have struck a keen observer as somewhat contradictory to

the account they had to give of the cause of their being found there.

But neither of the ladies happened to be keen observers. Emily's having escaped any material injury, was matter of such real joy to Katty, that she made no remarks whatever, but bustled to get her into the barouche, where Charles seeing her safely seated, remounted his horse, and kept riding close by the side of the carriage, his eye resting delightedly on her loved countenance, till he assisted her in safety out of it again.

No farther interruptions occurring, the day passed off very pleasantly ; more so, indeed, to Charles and Emily than any they recollected to have passed before, notwithstanding they were taxed by some of the company with contributing less than upon former occasions to the general hilarity.

From this time the intercourse between the young people, at the Park and the Priory, increased greatly, for it had latterly

been checked by Sophia's wish for retirement ; but Emily unconsciously betrayed such solicitude for promoting the acquaintance between her and the Belmonts, as soon opened her sister's eyes to the motive, and she gave way to meeting them at the Priory with as good a grace as she was able.

Agatha was now become the plaything and amusement of the Priory, as well as the occupation of the cottage. The occupation had its difficulties, which Mrs. Delmere took the most judicious modes of overcoming. The child was intelligent and affectionate in an uncommon degree ; but she was also violent and refractory. The grand impediment to rapid improvement lay with Winny, " Cot pless hur soul, hur was not of marple, to hear her poor little tear missy cry so long and hart—preak a plood fessel may pe and tie !—no inteet, Matam Telmere's must not expect hur can to so !" Of course, whilst Agatha was aware of the

power of her tears over her maid, she was not sparing of them. Affection and kindness were, however, gradually working their way, when a sad check to the progress came from an unlooked-for quarter.

## CHAP. VII.

WHEN Sir Edward Arundel went to inform his uncle of the existence of a grandchild, he found him in great affliction for his only remaining son, who had been seized with a putrid fever, and given over by the physicians.

He died—and when the first paroxysm of grief had subsided, Mr. Arundel's thoughts naturally reverted to Agatha, whom he now determined to make heiress to his large property. “She is all that I have left,” he said; “and it will be an object of great interest to me, to have her educated under my own eye;



you, my dear Sir Edward, I know to be possessed of too much liberality to grudge this preference of my grand-daughter to your hereditary claims."

This was but doing justice to Sir Edward's disinterestedness; he highly applauded the intention, but anxiously sought to prevail upon his uncle to leave the child under Mrs. Delmere's care, and pointed out the obvious advantages of it with much energy. Mr. Arundel, however, adhered tenaciously to the idea of having her educated under his own eye; it would be both a consolation and an amusement to him, and there could be no difficulty in meeting with some proper person to take charge of her, when she was a little older; meanwhile Mrs. Arundel (a widowed relative, who had the care of his family) would see to all that was necessary for the present.

Sir Edward could obtain no mitigation of this decree. He foresaw Mrs. Delmere's resistance to it, and sought to

store his mind with all the persuasive arguments he could devise, to conquer her reluctance, and soften her sense of the sacrifice she was called upon to make to Agatha's ultimate advantage. This he satisfied himself could be better effected in person than by letter;—so he again repaired to his inn, at Hurstbourne, whence he dispatched a messenger to request admittance at the cottage, trusting that, although this might savour a little of formality, it would secure him from the danger of encountering any other female, than her who had now become an exception to his prejudice against the sex.

His note followed Sophia to the Priory, whither she had just walked over with her little charge.

“Will you take care of Agatha for an hour, aunt Katharine?” she said, after reading the note. “I am wanted at the cottage.”

“Don't let it be longer, my dear, for

I have a thousand things to do," replied the ever busy Katty.

"I will send Winny for her, if I do not return myself by that time," was the answer.

Sir Edward Arundel's communication was extremely distressing to Sophia; and the circumstance of his uncle's intention to make Agatha his heir, on which he had chiefly relied for reconciling her to the separation, did but increase her unwillingness to part with her. "You could not have offered an argument less calculated to remove my objection, than her being threatened with becoming an heiress," she said.

"Threatened!" Sir Edward exclaimed with much surprise: "forgive the repetition of your word; but you spoke it with an emphasis, which I own astonishes me."

"Your astonishment will surely cease, if you reflect for a moment, how greatly the chances against a girl's marrying

happily, are increased by her being made an object to the rapacity which pervades every rank of life. What is to convince her that she is sought for those qualities which ensure conjugal felicity, and without that—" Poor Sophia's countenance clouded over, and she was unable to proceed.

Sir Edward, without seeming to observe it, playfully replied, " Consummate beauty might be objected to, on the same grounds; but we should not readily find a young lady willing to forego the dangerous possession, and submit to a little intentional disfigurement."

With recovered self-possession, she replied, " But will you not allow that we might find many a married one ready to agree with me, that beauty or fortune had proved the bane of her happiness? I grant you, however, that it is not the experience of others that would be likely to induce a young woman to renounce either advantage, particularly in the pre-

sent mode of education.—You look surprised !”

“ I confess it is new to me to hear such an opinion seriously advanced.”

“ I have known it acted upon,” Sophia replied. “ A friend of my own had but one child, and it was a daughter ; she used all her influence with her husband to obtain his concurrence in letting the world understand, that he favoured the idea of male succession so much, as to intend her no larger a fortune than if she had had brothers. Under this impression she was sought and won by a man of fortune so inferior, and delicacy so great, as would have effectually precluded him from urging his suit, had he conceived her to be an heiress : he is possessed of every estimable and every amiable quality, and they are eminently happy ; but it was almost laughable to hear of the difficulties he raised against owing his affluence to his wife, when he discovered he had been cheated into marrying an heiress ; he did,

however, at length submit to be made rich, and she 'bears her faculties so meekly,' as to spare his pride all the mortifications he had anticipated."

"There is no contending against a fact, nor shall I deny that a large fortune may cast a doubtful shade over the disinterestedness of a lover; but until we can new model our generation, we must expect to pass for singular, at least, in holding such advantages cheap."

"At the hazard of even passing for romantic, I must adhere to it. I can adduce another case in point, where the loss of the fortune has produced the happiness its possession would have impeded; a son was born at the end of sixteen years, during which a poor girl had been considered as sole heiress to a large estate; a suitor to whom she had, in obedience to her parents, though much against her own inclination, agreed to give her hand, immediately drew back. She was suffered to marry the man of her

choice, and their felicity is unclouded. What must it have been with the mercenary wretch, to whom she was so nearly sacrificed? Many a woman has also remained single all her life from being impressed with the idea that her fortune was the chief attraction."

"I perceive I have no chance of bringing you to consider my uncle's intentions towards Agatha, as any compensation for parting with her; but shall you think it right to risk changing them, by the refusal to give her up? He is, I am obliged to confess, both captious and whimsical."

"Whatever my view of the subject may be, I am clear I should not be justified in acting upon it; a grandfather's right must supersede mine; but if you could obtain a compromise, I might still hope to avert some of the mischief I foresee from this change in poor Agatha's prospect."

"Command my utmost exertion in

any thing that may relieve your solicitude for her."

"If she might be entrusted to me for half the year—when he goes up to attend parliament—he would not, during his stay in London, miss the amusement he expects her to be to him; and, oh! how much more than amusement she would be to me!"

"And of what inestimable importance to the poor child!" exclaimed Sir Edward.

Just at this instant the door was suddenly opened, and Katty put in her head to say, "I really couldn't wait for Winny any longer, and my brother wouldn't be troubled with her noise, and nobody else was in the way, so I have brought her."

"O law! Sir Edward Arundel!" interrupted Agatha, as she skipped into the room.

"Sir Edward Arundel!" repeated Katty, in the utmost surprise.

As she held the door in her hand, it



had screened Sir Edward from her sight, he having retreated to the wall in dismay at the sound of another female voice, whilst Sophia coloured from confusion at having forgotten to send for the child, according to her promise. These little circumstances went to the strengthening of Katty's hopes, at the same time that she felt rather disconcerted at her own *mal-a-propos* intrusion; and she was on the point of again shutting the door and running off, when she recollected that this would be the height of incivility: so then bustling forward, she reiterated—

“ Sir Edward Arundel! why, dear me, niece Delmere! why didn't you tell me who it was that sent for you? I am sure I should never have thought of such a thing, as breaking in upon your secret conferences in this manner.—However, as it has so happened, I am extremely glad, sir, to have the pleasure of seeing you—and I hope we shall be better acquainted, and that you will not suspect my having

any intentions of prying into my niece's conduct.—”

“ My dear aunt !” cried Sophia, breaking into this foolish speech, “ depend upon it one look of your countenance will always suffice to exonerate you from unkind intention of any sort.—Give me leave, Sir Edward, to make you acquainted with Mrs. Katharine Villars, a favourite aunt with all of us, whose good-nature we are apt to trespass upon, from finding it inexhaustible. I beg your pardon, indeed, for neglecting to send for Agatha !”

This was uttered with a look and a smile that Sir Edward thought might have become an angel.

“ Well, my dear, she will perhaps be in your way now,” said Katty, with a significant look ; “ shall I take her with me to old Nanny’s ?”

“ No, I choose to stay here,” cried Agatha ; “ I’m never in aunt Delmere’s way when I’m quiet, am I, aunty ?”

“ You may amuse yourself with looking over the prints in that book yonder,” said Sophia, “ if you have had as much walking as you wish.”

“ I could walk a good deal more—and I like to go to old Nanny, because she’s so funny ; but I always like best to stay with you, when I may, aunty !”

Sophia’s eyes filled.

Sir Edward had no idea there had been so much heart in the little girl—he felt pleased with her ; and upon reflection he did not regret the intrusion of Mrs. Katharine : the circumstance had shown Mrs. Delmere in a new light ; with what sweetness she had warded off the continuation of her nonsensical harangue !—

The subject under consideration was carried on in a way not likely to attract the child’s attention. It was finally settled that Sir Edward should use his utmost influence with Mr. Arundel in favour of Sophia’s proposal ; and then,

having bestowed as much time as he decently could upon the sandwiches, he took his leave, with a feeling something bordering on mortification for not being detained to dinner.

“What makes Sir Edward Arundel look so, when he speaks to you, aunty?” said Agatha, the moment the door was closed after him.

“Look how, my dear?”

“I don’t know—so good-natured I mean.”

“Does he not always look good-natured?”

“No, indeed!—he always looked cross at me, and at Winny—and his voice was like being angry; but he makes it so good-natured like when he speaks to you.”

Sophia’s mind was engrossed by the subject she had been canvassing, and she paid no attention to the child’s remark.

Not so aunt Katty—she treasured it in her heart of hearts when Agatha repeated it to her ; nothing could be more promising ! but she deemed it prudent to caution the little girl against the mischief she might inadvertently do ; so she told her, “ Little girls should never look at gentlemen.”

“ Why not ? ”

“ Because gentlemen don’t like to be observed upon when they are in company with ladies.”

“ What is ‘ observed upon ? ’ ”

“ Taking notice of what they say and do.”

“ What would Sir Edward do to me ? ”

“ He would be very angry with you.”

“ But I don’t care for his being angry, for I don’t love him one bit.”

“ But aunt Delmere would be angry with you.”

“ Would she ?—Is she a lady ? ” Aga-

tha's idea of ladies was confined to the visitors she saw at the Priory.

“To be sure, child! what a foolish question!”

“Then mustn't I mind Sir Edward Arundel at all when he visits aunty?”

“No;—don't trouble your head about any thing he says or does, but amuse yourself with your playthings.”

“Well then, so I will,” replied Agatha.

Laura had not been remiss in endeavours to ascertain the truth of the reports that prevailed in the village, for Sir Edward was an object of no slight interest; and Emily perfectly satisfied her, by explaining the nature of his visits. Charles Belmont had never given any credit to the story; and Lord Belmont conceived it to be immaterial, as not likely to affect Sir Edward's political conduct one way or other; so the matter was pretty much at rest with the family

at the Park, and neither hint nor inuendo from any of them, had given the slightest alarm at the Priory; where Sophia's continued depression, when not called upon for particular exertions, had likewise contributed to avert every idea of the kind.

## CHAP. VIII.

SIR Edward found himself irresistibly impelled to be a very active agent in the negociation he had undertaken. No wonder ! Mrs. Delmere, although a woman, was formed, it must be acknowledged, to excite feelings of interest and esteem, in every thinking mind ! possibly, indeed, her being the relict of his friend might bias his judgment—at any rate it assuredly entitled her to be served with zeal—he should not be much surprised to discover very exalted sentiments in her—in fact friendship was wholly independent of sex—why should not good



sense and a cultivated mind receive the tribute due to them, though they had the misfortune of being decked in female attire ! He had once valued himself upon his skill in physiognomy—this Miss Vyner had caused him to forswear ; and yet it now again forced itself upon him—there was no mistaking the expression of Mrs. Delmere's countenance—so open—so candid—so intelligent. Delmere he recollected used to rave of her beauty—her features might be faultless—he had paid no particular attention to them—friendship had nothing to do with beauty of person—though certainly the eye even of a friend, rests with more pleasure upon an agreeable face, than upon a plain one!—

In cogitations such as these, he reached Rock Castle.

It was a matter of no small difficulty to bring Mr. Arundel to give the slightest consideration to Mrs. Delmere's proposal. Having been many years a widower, he had acquired all the selfish habits of an

old bachelor, and expected indulgence in all his whims ; he looked for amusement from the child's playfulness ; and when told of her hitherto neglected education, and the improvement already visible from Mrs. Delmere's judicious management, he laughed at the idea of beginning to educate at such early years, adding, "And you, Ned, of all people in the world, setting forth the pre-eminence of any one woman, who have been taught a lesson that might have pretty well settled you with regard to the whole sex !"

Finding his uncle not to be moved by this argument, he endeavoured to alarm him by strongly stating the torment a child so sadly spoiled would be to himself ; and the little probability of Mrs. Arundel's being able to manage her.

This so far succeeded as to protract the ultimate decision to the end of a few weeks trial. He would have the child and her maid come to Rock Castle forthwith ; and if it actually appeared that

she was above their hand, he would agree to let her go back, for Mrs. Delmere to make her more tractable, during the winter months, while he was in London.

Not being able to obtain any better terms, Sir Edward was obliged to let the matter rest there for the present, and set forward once more for the Priory cottage.

Vexed and mortified at the ill success of his embassy, it was very natural Sophia should occupy his thoughts during his journey. He had so friendly a sense too of the disappointment she would feel; he had seen how her heart was set upon fulfilling her duty, by all that was left of Delmere—and he so honoured her for it! It likewise occurred to him, (for what will not occur to a mind long turned on one subject?) that he himself must have appeared deficient in testimonies of respect to Delmere's widow!—Having been forced once more into female society, whether he would or no, he foresaw the unfortu-

nate consequence must be an occasional continuance of intercourse, which might eventually throw him into the way of the other women of the family ; and it would be but a proper compliment to request her introduction of him to her mother and sister—and certainly, if they at all resembled her, there was not so much cause to shun them, as he had been inclined to think.—In fact, he could not but acknowledge to himself, that his mind was considerably relieved by being able again to think well of a woman ; and he might possibly have been too severe in his condemnation of the whole sex for the failure of one.

To that one his thoughts now reverted, and he was led to a comparison between her and Mrs. Delmere. He had never been able to consider this so impartially before, and he was free to confess he discovered deficiencies in Miss Vyner, which had not struck him till this moment ; she wanted that dignified simplicity—that

total disregard of admiration, so apparent in Mrs. Delmere ; he recollected traits in Augusta, that might fairly enough have been placed to the account of coquetry, during the height of her pretended attachment, had not love blinded his judgment.—Aye, love was ever delusive ! —widely different is the unbiassed clear-sightedness of friendship !

Sir Edward had thought—and canvassed—and argued himself into a very placid state of mind ; and he arrived at the cottage with looks so different from any he had worn in his former visits, as immediately to impress Sophia with the certainty of his having succeeded to her utmost wish.

“ I scarcely need ask what news you bring, Sir Edward ; I read success in your countenance,” she said.

“ I grieve to disappoint you,” he replied ; “ I have not succeeded to the extent of my wishes.

Sophia changed colour. “ Have you

entirely failed?" in a voice of much alarm.

"Not entirely; I have obtained a suspension of the final determination, which is something; but even that is clogged with a condition which I fear will distress you—Agatha and her maid must be sent without delay to Rock Castle; and according as his grandchild pleases him, Mr. Arundel will decide."

"O, Sir Edward! she will be taken from me altogether!—she will be lost!—and so shall I!"

Sir Edward, much affected, endeavoured to convince her of the slight ground there was to apprehend that she could at Rock Castle be under such management as to afford her grandfather the amusement he looked for.

A little recovering, Sophia resumed, "My exclamation may sound both vain and selfish, as if I alone could counteract the mischief to which she has been exposed, and that my own deprivation were

my chief concern—but I mean that from your representation of Mrs. Arundel, she cannot be the person to manage such a child as Agatha ; and my distress is not so much for the loss of my own pleasure in her, as for losing the means of doing the best I can by all that is left of ——” Again tears impeded her utterance ; and the mistaken idea of refraining from speaking of her husband in the first period of grief, when nothing can be an aggravation, made it now almost impossible for her to pronounce his name.

“ I trust to the improbability of Mrs. Arundel’s acquiring any sort of controul over Agatha, for her speedy restoration to the only hands that seem equal to the undertaking.”

“ I should have but little confidence in them, were it not for the assistance of my mother and sister, to which I can upon any emergence have recourse ; for she is by no means a common child, either in mind or disposition.”

“ Will you forgive my breaking for one moment into this interesting subject, with a request for the honour of an introduction to that mother and sister at your leisure ; I am anxious for an opportunity of making my personal apology at the Priory, for the apparent rudeness with which I declined the obliging invitation of Mr. Villars, the first time I was down here.”

“ I shall be very glad to make you acquainted with them ; and perhaps it had better be without loss of time, for I think they were proposing a visit at some distance this morning. I will slip on my pelisse in a minute.”

Meeting Agatha at the door, she sent her into the room to put by her books ; telling her to get ready to go with her and Sir Edward to the Priory.

He kindly took her hand, and asked some question about the books, which she answered, adding, “ Now you look



almost as good-natured at me as you do at aunt Delmere."

"Did I ever look crossly at you, Agatha?" he replied, rather surprised at the observation.

"Yes, that I'm sure you did; that made me tell aunt Katty I didn't love you one bit."

"Well, I'll take care not to look so any more, and then I hope you will love me one bit."

"Nor at Winny neither?"

"Nor at Winny neither."

"O! then I shall love you indeed, and take care not to make you angry."

Mrs. Delmere's return stopped what more might have come out, and they proceeded to the Priory; Agatha running and skipping on before, so as not to impede the continued discussion of the topic uppermost in Sophia's thoughts; and ere they reached the drawing room window that opened to the lawn, he had

succeeded in raising some hope in her mind, that the visit to Rock Castle might produce the very contrary effect from what she feared.

The introduction of Sir Edward Arundel was a very agreeable circumstance to the whole family, and Mr. Villars made a point of retaining him to dinner; to which he ‘nothing loath,’ assented. A frank cordiality of manner prevailed at the Priory, which soon set their guest at ease, although in company with two new females.

When the carriage was announced, that was to take Mrs. Villars and Emily to their visit, Henry proposed a walk about the grounds to Sir Edward. At their return they found Mr. Villars deeply engaged with his newspaper—Sophia arranging some specimens in her sister’s herbal—and Agatha teaching Doll her letters in a corner of the room.

Sir Edward, after observing upon the

selection of the botanical specimens, addressed some little playful question to Agatha.

No answer.

He repeated his question.

No answer.

“Agatha!” said Sophia, “don’t you hear Sir Edward Arundel speaking to you?”

“Yes.”

“Then why don’t you answer, my dear?”

“Because aunt Katty said I mustn’t.”

“Impossible! aunt Katty couldn’t bid you be rude!”

“But indeed, now aunty, she did tell me never to mind any thing Sir Edward Arundel said or did, when he was with you—and she said he would’nt like it—indeed she did now!”

Sophia, wholly unconscious of Katty’s ideas, saw nothing in these words, but some misconception of the child’s—but an electrical shock could not have pro-

duced a more instantaneous effect than they had upon Sir Edward. A plot!—a plan!—a perception of female art rushed into his mind, and with it such a recurrence to all his prejudices, as made him wish himself any where but where he had so weakly got himself introduced. A dark cloud overshadowed his brow, and he sat silent and abstracted.

Just at this moment, Katty bustled into the room. “Do give me the aromatic vinegar! quick! quick.”—But her eye now falling upon the visitor, she began an elaborate complimentary speech, which was broken into by Agatha, who running to her, caught hold of both her hands, exclaiming, “Now, aunt Katty!—aunty Delmere won’t believe me!—didn’t you say Sir Edward Arundel would be angry, and aunt Delmere too, if I minded any thing he said or did when he was with her—now wasn’t them your words?”

This abrupt attack quite overset poor Katty, and she stammered out, “Aye!

Sir Edward, or any other gentleman, or lady.”—

“ No, no ! but you did say Sir Edward—and I said—”

“ Well, no matter what you said, Agatha !” interrupted Sophia ; her observation awakened by Katty’s evident confusion. “ Come hither, we will defer our lecture upon behaviour to some more convenient time—no gentlemen like little girls that are troublesome.”—

There was such perfect unembarrassment and openness in Sophia’s countenance, while saying this, as seemed decidedly to acquit her at least of participating in whatever idea might have taken possession of the rest of the family. —Sir Edward felt more at ease, and determined to abide by his dinner engagement, for his first impulse had been to make some pretence for a sudden retreat.

“ Merciful goodness !—and here am I forgetting the poor woman in a fit all this while !” cried Katty, eager to escape,

“ what’s the dose, my dear ?—a spoonful ? ”

“ My dear aunt ! you are not going to make her swallow the aromatic vinegar ? you’ll choak her ! ” cried Sophia.

“ Dear me ! I’m glad you told me, I thought it had been the same as hartshorn, and that sort of thing. ”—

“ The hartshorn is on the chimney piece in the next room. ” Katty moved off with all speed.

“ I should apprehend full as much danger from the doctor as from the disease, if Mrs. Katharine’s prescriptions pass uncorrected, ” said Sir Edward to Henry, trying to recover himself.

“ That apprehension might not be misapplied to higher authorities than aunt Katty’s, ” Henry answered with a smile.

“ What has Katty been about now ? ” said Mr. Villars, who had been too intent upon Lord W——’s movements, to hear a word of what was passing.

He laughed heartily when told, and

said, "Nothing can be more diverting than the confusion of Katty's brain! Every thing finds its way *pêle-mêle* into it, and issues from it in the same order—it's an inexhaustible fund of amusement! I wouldn't have her set right for the world."

"But, my dear father! what is sport to you, may be death to some of the poor people! If she could but just be restrained from administering her remedies till she consulted you or my mother—" said Sophia.

Mr. Villars had called Sir Edward's attention to the newspaper, while she spoke, and a political disquisition ensued, which superseded all farther concern in Katty's proceedings for the present.

## CHAP. IX.

AFTER dinner, Sophia communicated the result of Sir Edward's negotiation ; and the time and mode of sending Agatha to Rock Castle was taken into consideration.

“ Suppose,” said Katty, “ I were to take her there ! I shouldn't mind the trouble at all ; it would be quite a party of pleasure to me ; and then I could put them into the right way of managing her, you know.”

Sir Edward was somewhat amused with the idea of a meeting between the bustling communicative Katty, and the prim



Mrs. Arundel ; but very loath, under the alarm that had now taken possession of his mind, to promote any unnecessary intercourse, he proposed a trusty servant of his own to attend Agatha and Winny on horseback ; Mrs. Delmere had thought of Victoire ; Mr. Villars suggested his old butler, of whom the child was fond.

During these pro's and con's, Katty finding her services not likely to be accepted in the way she had proposed, forthwith turned her thoughts to making herself useful in another. " Nobody will think of telling the poor little girl of all this !" was her considerate reflection, " and she will be taken by surprise, so I had better prepare her."

And away she went in quest of Agatha ; she found her at high romps with Winny and the old butler.

" Aye, make the most of your time, my love," said Katty, " you'll not be

allowed all these indulgences where you are going."

"Why, where am I going to?"

"To your grand-papa Arundel."

"Indeed, but I shan't do no such thing! I don't care for my grand-papa Arundel."

"Oh fie! it's very naughty indeed, not to care for one's grand-papa!"

"Well, ton't cry missy tear," said Winny, "I will peg Matam Telmere's not let you go."

"Now Winny, how can you be so foolish; I tell you she must go," cried Katty.

"But I won't then!" exclaimed Agatha, passionately.

"Oh fie! fie! little girls that say they won't, must be made to do things!" continued the judicious Katty.

Agatha now worked up to one of her fits of violence, stamped with rage, screaming out, "Nobody can make me!"

"Then I must fetch aunt Delmere to you," said Katty; "you daren't behave so to her!"

“Daren’t I? but you shall see I dare!” cried she; and running away from them, she rushed into the drawing room, vociferating through her tears, “I will not go to grand-papa, aunt Delmere, I will not go away from you!”

“Hush, Agatha!” with great mildness, “you know I never understand you, when you speak and cry at the same time—compose yourself! and when we are alone you shall tell me what you have to say—we must not trouble company with our arguments.”—

“No, but aunt Katty says—”

“You shall tell me that by and bye—and then I have something to tell you, when you are good and quiet again—get out of the window upon the lawn now, and look at that beautiful shrub yonder.”

Agatha went sobbing to the window, and did as her aunt bid her.

“Katty was determined not to be idle,” said Mr. Villars; “she is a rare hand at working up a broil.”

“ I had better go and learn from her what has passed,” said Mrs. Villars.

“ Thank you, dear mother, if you please,” returned Sophia ; and Mrs. Villars left the room.

“ This will require something more of coercion, I presume, than is habitual with you,” Sir Edward observed.

“ It will require no harsh means,” replied Sophia ; “ affection will do every thing with a disposition like hers.”

“ But is coaxing a child into good humour, any thing more than a temporary expedient, productive of worse consequences ?”

“ I have no intention of coaxing her.”

“ You must not be surprised that a bachelor should have no conception how such matters are managed.”

“ Bachelors in general cannot much care ; but as this poor little girl is going where you have some influence, it may not be unuseful for you to see how she can be brought round.”

Sir Edward, more interested than he was at all aware of, in any thing that concerned his new friend, expressed the wish he strongly felt, that it might enable him to suggest what could prove advantageous to the child.

Agatha had been recovering some composure whilst this was passing ; and Sophia having only waited to hear her mother's report, proposed to Sir Edward to accompany her to the seat under the plane tree ; and taking Agatha by the hand as she went by, led her along with them.

An occasional short sob, showed that all was not yet well within. " Aunt Katty said—" she again began.

Sophia interrupted her ; " you are not yet enough recovered to tell me your story, Agatha ; so you shall first hear mine. You must know that I am going to do something that is very disagreeable to me."

" O dear aunty !—what.?" eagerly.

“ Something that I would not do, if I could possibly help it.”

“ Who makes you? your papa and mamma?”

“ No, 'tis my own will makes me.”

“ O dear aunty don't let it then! my will only makes me do what I like.”

“ That's because you are too young and childish yet, to know what is best for you.”

“ How can it be best to do what I don't like?”

“ Do you remember when you had a bad head-ache and stomach-ache last week?”

“ Yes.”

“ Do you remember that you would not take the physic I had ordered, when Winny carried it to you?”

“ Yes, that I do—I threw it at her.”

“ Why did you take it afterwards?”

“ Because you know, aunty, you said it would make me not have the head-ache and stomach-ache.”

“ And was I right ?”

“ O yes, aunty, I was well quite soon, for I played at battledore afterwards, and kept it up ever so many.”

“ Then you see I knew what was good for you better than you did.”

“ Yes, to be sure—I know that very well.”

“ And it was because you are yet too young and childish, for your own will to make you do what is best for you.”

“ When I am older and wiser, shall I always do what is best for me ?”

“ I hope so—if while you are a child you always try to do what those who are older and wiser tell you is right.”

“ But I shan't never like to do what is disagreeable though.”

“ If you were to be ill again now, and I sent you a dose of physic by Winny, would you throw it at her ?”

“ No.”

“ Why not ? ”

“ Because it made me well, you know.”

“ Very well—then you see you have already sense enough to take a dose of physic, because you know it is good for you, though it is disagreeable.”

“ Yes, I have sense enough for that,” said Agatha, with some exultation.

“ And if I were to bid you do any thing else you didn’t like, because I knew it was good for you, would you do it ? ”

“ Yes, if you bid me.”

“ Very well, then you would do right—and what happens when you do right ? ”

“ Then you love me a good deal, aunty.”

“ And does that please you ? ”

“ Yes, very much indeed ! because I love you so dearly.”

Poor Sophia’s eyes filled at the warmth with which this was said. “ Now, Agatha,” she continued, “ when you grow up to be a woman like me, you will know of



yourself without any body's telling you, what are the disagreeable things people must do, in order to do right."

"And who loves them for doing right, when they are great big women?"

"All their relations and friends. And now I am going to tell you what the disagreeable thing is, I must be obliged to do, because I know it is right."

"What is it?" very anxiously.

"I shall be obliged, my dear little girl, to let you go away from me for a little while."

"O dear—dear aunty!" and she burst into an agony of tears; "that was what I wanted to tell you, about aunt Katty—but must you indeed let me go?"

"I should not do right if I did not. Your grand-papa Arundel wants very much to see his dear little grand-daughter, and make her love him; and if I were not to let you go, it would make him unhappy—and when you have pleased him by making him a visit, then you may come

back again to me, and you and I shall be all the more happy for having both done what was right."

"O dear aunty!" sobbing; "but I wish grand-papa would come and see me here."

"And so do I — but that can't be."

"And must I go all alone by myself?"

"Winny will go with you."

"But why can't you go too, aunty? O! I shouldn't mind where I went then!"

This was too much for Sophia, after the trying exertion she had made, and her own tears forced their way in spite of her.

Just then, Katty beckoned Agatha to her, from the opposite side of the lawn, calling out at the same time, "We are going to the Pheasantry: ask your aunt to let you come with us."

It was quite a relief at this moment, to send the child from her, and she bid her go. And away skipped Agatha, as if

there had been no dreaded grand-papa in the world.

“Happy age!” said Sophia, as she arose to move towards her father, who had been wheeled out upon the lawn in his Merlin chair, where he was deeply engaged in a financial pamphlet. “Happy age! when grief can so easily give way to the first new object!”

“Alas! I fear the objects that may be presented to her at Rock Castle, will be but little calculated to promote what you have so successfully begun,” said Sir Edward.

Sophia so strongly apprehended this, that she could not answer.

“I am not much accustomed to children,” he went on; “and I confess that I am surprised at the facility with which you succeeded in turning Agatha’s thoughts from her own distress, to a sympathy with yours, and an emulation of your example.”

“She is a child of strong affections and

quick parts," replied Sophia; "and steady, rational, kind treatment will mould her into any thing—the very warmth of her temper may be turned to good account."

"I cannot but admire," resumed Sir Edward, "what an adept you are, on a subject so foreign to what I should naturally have supposed your pursuits to be."

"I am perhaps in this instance more indebted to the experience of others than to my own reflections upon the subject. It has ever been one of deep interest in our family. I had a sister — some years younger than Emily and myself, that—but she was too much of an angel for this world!"

Excessive emotion from a concurrence of painful retrospections, overpowered her already harassed spirits, and checked her utterance.

Sir Edward's thoughts, as he silently contemplated her, were led back to old Montaigne—and the preference he gives to friendship over love. "*Ces deux sen-*

*timens sont bien entrés chez moi en connoissance l'un de l'autre, mais en comparaison jamais ;*" he says. "What, indeed, is love compared to the esteem and admiration this woman inspires !"

They were approaching Mr. Villars, who interrupted his revolvings by a sudden exclamation.

"It is impossible things can be suffered to go on so !" looking full at them as he raised his eyes from his pamphlet.

Sir Edward started.

"Specie will be annihilated altogether !" he continued.

Sir Edward smiled at his own alarm.

Mr. Villars entered upon a luminous statement of the increasing mischief of paper currency, &c. &c. in which his auditor entirely concurred, and hoped he should soon have an opportunity of renewing the discussion, being unfortunately, he said, obliged at this moment to take his leave ; which he did very abruptly, from having perceived an addition to the

party that was returning from the Pheasantry.

Something had passed at dinner, respecting an expectation of the Belmonts in the afternoon, which had determined him to make his escape immediately after coffee ; but the interesting scene with Agatha had put it out of his head, and nearly produced the misfortune he most dreaded, that of encountering fashionable females.

While the walking party were advancing, Mr. Villars continued his animadversions to his daughter ; which were, however, interrupted by Mrs. Villars bringing a letter for his approbation, which she had been writing at his desire. Putting it into his hand, she asked, “ What have you done with Sir Edward ? is he gone ? ”

“ Yes ; by the way, what were you and he in such earnest discourse upon, Soph ? ”

This question just reached the ear of Katty, as the walkers came up. “ Now I hold that to be a very unfair question,

brother," she exclaimed; "don't you, young ladies?—I'm always for old people not prying into the concerns of young ones, when they have a mind to talk apart.—We took the roundabout path to the Pheasantry, you know Emily, on purpose not to interrupt them."

Sophia, who had never yet bestowed a single thought upon what had of late so much engrossed the mind of her aunt, calmly said, "I should have been very unwilling, indeed, to have been interrupted till I had carried my point."

But Emily, perceiving the effect of Katty's speech upon some of the party, subjoined, "I was extremely glad, Sophia, you allowed Sir Edward Arundel to witness your method of bringing little Agg to reason, that he may report it at Rock Castle, provided they have but judgment to follow it up!"

"Aye, but that's the thing not to be expected, you know," resumed Katty; "and that's what made me offer to go,

to put them into the way on't—and I am sure, as I said, I should think it no sort of trouble, for the delight of my life is to be useful."

"Of that we are all aware, dear sister," replied Mrs. Villars; "but there are various considerations to be taken into the account."

"Well, well! so 'tis but settled for the best, I shall be content."

"And you know you are never at a loss for objects to bestow your usefulness upon, Mrs. Katharine," said Laura, with an arch smile.

"Why no, as you say, Miss Belmont," returned Katty, "nobody can accuse me of idleness, and not making the most of time; what is it Mr. Pope the poet says, about time,—you know, Henry?"

"Oh time! than lead more specious!"

"Not Pope!"

"Not lead!"

"Not specious!"

} came from different voices.

"You see *Gold* is become such an



obsolete commodity, Katt forgets its very name," said Mr. Villars, laughing heartily.

"Ah, well!—gold or lead, no matter which—but I meant about giving it 'a tongue.'"

"Who would have thought of your falling short there, Katt," said Mr. Villars.

"You are always so full of your jokes, brother, you won't help one out; but Henry knows what I mean."

"We take no note of time but from its loss

"To give it then a tongue was wise in man."

Henry repeated.

"Yes, yes, that's it; but that's not all—there's something about lead and gold too, I'm sure."

"O time! than gold more precious—more a load

"Than lead to fools,"

said Emily.

"Aye, that's what I was thinking of—but you see things get jumbled in my head somehow."

“Never mind, Katt; they don’t encumber it long; you jumble them out again with very good effect.”

A discussion now followed of the advantages and disadvantages to arise from Agatha’s change of abode; during which, Sophia, finding herself tired and exhausted, had slipped away, having desired her mother to let Agatha be sent after her to the cottage.

Here, however, she found, instead of rest, fresh and unforeseen cause of disquietude. Mademoiselle Victoire received her with *un air boudeur* so marked as not to be overlooked.

“What is the matter?” said Sophia, “something seems to have disturbed you.”

“Matter enough, indeed!” was the answer; “when I have the misfortune to be so entirely excluded from madame’s confidence, as to be ignorant of what the whole country rings with.”

“What may that be, pray?”

“Madame’s approaching marriage with Sire Arondel.”

“My approaching marriage with Sir Edward Arundel!” reiterated Sophia in utter astonishment; “surely, Victoire, you dream! or your ignorance of the language must make you misunderstand.”

“No, no—she could not misunderstand—all the servants—all the people had it from Madame Kattee herself.—She had never been so ill treated before; she defied any of the ladies she had served to convict her of the smallest indiscretion; and she had been entrusted with *des confidences bien autrement importantes* than a simple affair of matrimony.—Madame was the first that ever doubted her fidelity.” Here a plentiful shower of tears heightened the pathos of her oratory.

She might otherwise have gone on much longer, before Sophia had power to stop her, so confounded was she with what she heard—that it should be possible

for her aunt to have taken such a fancy into her head! or if she had—to have communicated it to the servants, was so much beyond all former absurdity, as not to be credited.—At the same time the report, wherever it might originate, was vexatious to a degree that scarcely left Sophia the power of articulating with any sort of calmness—

“ You may rest assured, Victoire, that there is not the slightest foundation for such a report—there must be some unaccountable mistake in regard to my aunt’s giving any sanction to it—and I charge you to contradict it flatly wherever you may hear it.”

Victoire was as much undone to find there was no chance of a wedding, as at having been kept in ignorance of it, “ because, certainly,” she said, “ nothing could so soon console madame for her loss, as *un beau cavalier comme Sire Arondel*.”

Sophia, with marked displeasure, forbade her ever again to speak upon so hateful a subject, and immediately dispatched a messenger for Katty, feeling she could have no peace till she had ascertained what had actually occurred.

## CHAP. X.

KATTY obeyed the summons with great alacrity, little suspecting the attack that awaited her. She was at first a good deal confused, but soon rallying, “wondered at the nonsense of people to come teasing her niece with such reports, particularly when she had taken such pains to prevent it.”

“But with whom? and in what did the reports originate?” Sophia asked.

“Bless you, my dear! why who can tell? his coming so often, I suppose, and seeing nobody but you.”

“But who spoke to you upon the subject, aunt?”

“ Why, dear heart alive ! how can I recollect ?—Every body—the people of the village—and the servants—they were all full of it—but I give you my word, I forbad them all to talk of it, and told them it was as much as their place was worth ; and I made no manner of doubt, they would have kept it all snug among themselves.”

“ But did you not make it clear that there was nothing to keep snug ? that it was all abominable scandal and malice.”

“ Really now, my dear, it would have gone against my conscience to say that, when it was the very thing I was wishing from the bottom of my heart to happen ; but I protest to you I forbad every one of ’em, again and again, to mention it : for, says I, it stands to reason that my niece would be extremely angry to have such a thing get about yet.”

“ Yet ! merciful heaven ! why that was confirming.”

“ Nay, now, niece Delmere ! I must

say this is such an unfair accusation ! can you possibly call it confirming, when I was all the while forbidding them ? but as to telling a falsehood, and saying it's a thing I don't wish, it's what you must excuse me, I never will do, seeing how much I have your happiness at heart."

Sophia had never found it more difficult to command her temper ; she did, however, command it, and only said, " I know how kind your intentions always are, aunt ! but if you would only have warned me—"

" Warned you ! that would have been a good joke indeed ! when it was the very thing I was wanting nobody to do—knowing well enough, that the upshot of that would have been oversetting all my hopes at once !"

" Good heaven ! hopes !—well !" again checking herself ; " we will say no more upon the subject ; it only remains now to consider what may best be done."

" Why, if you'll take my advice, my



dear, the very best that can be done, is just to leave the matter where it is : what need you care what they say ? there's no treason in matrimony ! and you being once again a free woman—”

“ I beg pardon for interrupting you ; but I must entreat to hear no more of this—and request you to give the most unqualified contradiction to every suggestion of the kind, and say that I hold myself degraded by the bare suspicion of such levity.”

“ I'm quite sorry, my dear, to see you in such a taking, and I'll say any thing you please, and tell them all that you know nothing of it's having got about.”

“ My dear aunt Katharine, will you give me leave just to mention the words I wish you to make use of.”

“ To be sure, my dear, if you think I am not to be trusted ; but —”

“ Then only be kind enough to say, Mrs. Delmere would despise herself, if

she could ever think of contracting a second marriage!"

"Well now, I protest you don't know how dangerous it is to make such declarations! I'm sure you must remember poor Mrs. Watson's declaring she never would marry a man that wore a wig or took snuff; and —"

"Once more, forgive my interrupting you! but my head aches so desperately, I must go and lie down."

"Dear dear! how sad! what can have brought it on? shall I sit by you, my dear?"

"By no means, quiet and darkness are my best restorers."

"But really, niece, I don't like to leave you while you are ill — particularly when you are so vexed.—I might think of something to enliven you."

"No, thank you, dear aunt! good night—good night!"

Very reluctantly did Katty repeat the

words, and leave her to her meditations, which were not of a nature to procure her much repose ; and at a very early hour of the following morning she was with her mother.

Mrs. Villars, wholly ignorant of the report, was alarmed at Sophia's agitated appearance—the explanation sufficiently accounted for it. She took ample share in the vexation, but endeavoured to pacify her daughter with the idea that the thing must die away of itself, when there were actually no grounds for it.

“ But, dearest mother, do but consider the humiliation of its reaching Sir Edward's ear. I see only one mode of proceeding for me ; and that is, never more to admit him at the cottage.”

“ Agatha's going to her grandfather,” Mrs. Villars observed, “ will naturally put an end to his visits, and to all farther idea on the subject.”

“ At all events I am determined not to receive him again,” said Sophia ; “ and

now that he has become acquainted here, what further intercourse may be necessary respecting Agatha, can be carried on through you."

Mrs. Villars concurred in this; pleased that Sophia had struck upon any thing to satisfy her delicacy in some degree: though not entirely coinciding in her wish of so completely shutting the door against future contingencies, she judged it best to let matters of this nature take their own course.

When she imparted the circumstance to Mr. Villars, he treated it with great contempt. "Stuff and nonsense!" he cried; "who the devil would mind the gossip of a country village! he thought Soph had had more sense.—For his own part, he wished with all his soul the report were true; Sir Edward appeared to him a perfect gentleman, with a very clear financial head, for he entirely agreed in his view of H—'s pamphlet."

"At any rate," Mrs. Villars resumed,

“ it would not be pleasant to have such a rumour reach Sir Edward as sanctioned by us ; and your sister really seems to have encouraged it. I wish you would enforce the impropriety to her ; she will more readily give way to your admonitions than either to Sophia’s or mine.”

Mr. Villars was sensible of the indelicacy, and promised to lecture her ; he accordingly acquitted himself of the task with much earnestness and considerable warmth, but little effect. Poor Katty’s reasoning faculties were of that obtuse description, which completely foils the powers of logic. She ended as she began, by declaring, that “ if she could be allowed to understand her mother tongue, she had made it as clear as so many words could make it, *that it was a subject the family did not choose should be talked of*: and she thought it the hardest thing in the world to have the report laid at her door, when any body might see she had been crying her eyes out all

night with vexation at her niece's suspecting her of it ; but as to making her say it was a thing she did not wish, that was such a falsehood as nothing should induce her to utter —”

She was interrupted with the assurance that her wishes should in no shape be interfered with, provided she kept them to herself ; and all that could finally be obtained was a faithful promise—that she would henceforth hold her tongue upon the subject.

Sir Edward Arundel had left the Priory in a very doubtful frame of mind. He could not satisfy himself, whether he had done right or wrong in getting introduced to the Villars's. He had no great fault to find with any of them ; on the contrary—but there certainly was something very remarkable in what the child had betrayed ; and yet Mrs. Delmere seemed so perfectly unembarrassed by it, that she must stand acquitted of whatever it might mean. Where woman was con-

cerned, however, double dealing might always be apprehended—that he knew but too well!—Delmere's widow though might really be deemed an exception to general rules. What feeling!—what good sense in every word and look!—what happiness might not the friendship of such a woman impart! but to cultivate it was not a thing to be thought of; her family—the world—could not understand it!—Friendship with woman was even a proverbial jest! he should immediately be suspected of what could never again arise in his mind—no—it would never do!—the purity—the delicacy of that sort of attachment was ever misconstrued—in fact, it was evident the aunt was already upon the look out, and there was no knowing how far some others of the family might be so too!—

Mrs. Delmere herself was assuredly as free from such thoughts as he was—her whole soul was engrossed by grief for her husband, and solicitude for Agatha

—not another idea could find place in it—this was her great perfection!—it was here she soared above her sex!—in such a mind as that, to obtain an interest were indeed something!—and might he not in some degree entitle himself to it by vigilant attention to the situation of the child at Rock Castle!—He congratulated himself upon having carried his point in the choice of old Jenkins for her escort—that would ensure him a faithful report of her reception there, which he should have pleasure in imparting. He had for one moment been tempted to offer himself as her conductor, but that might have been misinterpreted!—Yes—he was glad he had resisted that!—On the whole, it would be well to guard against misconstructions, and act as occasion might arise.

At his return home, however, his plans were somewhat disconcerted, by finding old Jenkins laid up with a rheumatic fever, with very little prospect of being



soon able to stir, and Agatha was expected at Rock Castle without delay.

Here was a dilemma!—

To offer himself after all that had just been passing in his mind, was not to be thought of!—the circumstance must, however, be imparted—but how?—opening a correspondence with a woman was an extremely awkward thing!—so much time lost by letters too!—verbal communication greatly preferable—far more expeditious to return to Hurstbourne at once.—He also found his spirits so eminently benefited by all the exercise he had of late been obliged to take in this business—it was clearly every way best.

So back he went—not this time to the inn, but straight to the Priory cottage.

He sent in his request to see Mrs. Delmere on particular business.

Mrs. Delmere was sorry she was so particularly engaged she could not receive Sir Edward; but if he would have the goodness to impart the business,

whatever it might be, to Mrs. Villars, it would be exactly the same thing as to herself.

This message was accurately and distinctly delivered by Victoire in French.

Sir Edward was in no sort of hurry, and would wait Mrs. Delmere's leisure, and do himself the honour, in the meanwhile, to pay his respects at the Priory.

Mrs. Delmere did not expect to be disengaged all day—was the second message Victoire brought.

He hoped she was not ill?

“No, perfectly well,” Victoire said.

He left his best compliments, and repaired to the Priory, with a mixture of surprise and displeasure, that was very evident in his appearance, when he made his bow to Mrs. Villars.

He informed her circumstantially of his disappointment at the cottage and reference to her; not without hope of some explanation from her upon the subject; but she simply said, “She was glad

she was at home to receive the communication he had come to make.

With increased dissatisfaction, he imparted his business; and with constrained civility, expressed his wish to know what expedient might now be adopted?

It luckily happened that Mrs. Villars's housekeeper had asked leave to visit her mother in the very part of Herefordshire to which Agatha was going; and this being sufficient protection, settled the affair at once.

When he rose to take his leave, Mrs. Villars invited him to accept of their family dinner, which he coolly declined, and hurried away in a state of considerable discomposure.

His road lay in a contrary direction; but it so happened that his steps mechanically took the Cottage path; and just as he recollected himself, and was turning away from the garden wicket, he saw Katty coming towards it from the

house, and could not well avoid stopping to make a civil inquiry after her health ; which was followed by an expression of regret, at having so unfortunately timed his visit, as to find Mrs. Delmere engaged for the whole day.

“ Why yes,” replied she, with some hesitation, determined to be upon her guard this time : “ Yes—it’s altogether unfortunate enough, to be sure !—but I hope, sir, Mamosel delivered the message very civilly. I was fearful she mightn’t, and wished to have taken it to you myself, but my niece wouldn’t let me.”

“ Perfectly civil—only very disappointing.”

“ O dear !—disappointing !—aye, now that’s just what I thought it would be ; and made me so desirous she should see you, if it had only been—” she stopped short, aware of saying more than she intended.

“ For five minutes,” he said, finishing her sentence for her : “ that was obligingly considerate of you, Mrs. Katharine; but the business that engaged her is so important, as not even to admit of that short interruption.”

“ Business!—bless your heart, no! ’t isn’t business at all.—Dearee me! what am I thinking of!—I beg pardon—yes, yes, it is business—that was the message she sent you, you know.”

“ That was certainly the message delivered, but I perceive a more simple one would have been, that my presence was unacceptable.”

“ My goodness! but you wouldn’t have had her so rude; besides, that’s quite a mistake too; for if it wasn’t for a reason I can’t explain—on account you see of wanting to stop all farther surmises on the subject—”

“ To what subject may you allude, Mrs. Katharine, I don’t understand—”

“ Dear, no, to be sure! I wouldn’t for

the world you should—that's just the thing!—and so I wish you a very good morning, Sir Edward!" breaking away abruptly, lest she should betray more; and leaving him perplexed, bewildered, and very indignant withal, at the inconceivable caprice of Mrs. Delmere.

So he walked away in high dudgeon; and, to complete his discomfiture, as he went along the paling of the Cottage garden, to get back into the road, he caught a glimpse through a break in the laurels of Sophia, sitting upon a bench, with a book in her hand, and Agatha playing at her side.—

He flew off in an absolute rage.

"Oh woman! woman! woman! capricious, inconsistent woman! Fool that I was!--Idiot! to give an instant's credence to friendship with woman!--that I could for one moment expect a solidity in woman, of which so few men are capable!"

Thus he went on, reviling the sex, and abusing his own weak folly, till he was fairly seated in his chaise, on his return to town.

As he came, however, by degrees to think the matter over more coolly, he was not so clear that Mrs. Delmere's conduct quite deserved the stigma his anger had affixed to it. What claim, after all, could he yet lay to her friendship? Engrossed as her mind still evidently was, could it be expected that she should bestow it unsought? Would it have any value if she did?—Her gratitude indeed! Yes—to her gratitude he surely had some claim! he who had abjured the sex! to have encountered what he had done for her sake! common gratitude might have induced her to put herself out of her way for one half hour in return for his having come so many miles—solely upon her business too! Gratitude, however, carried but a cold sound with it! it was cer-

tainly not the feeling to satisfy friendship; and indeed he trusted he was incapable of the meanness of acting with a view to be repaid by gratitude—odious thought!

He then reverted to the foolish aunt;—what might her words mean?—if any thing she said were likely to have a meaning!—it did seem as if her niece's unwillingness to trust her with the message, argued a fear of her betraying something. 'We want to stop all farther surmises,' she said; surmises?—of what?—Could it be, that the busy world ventured to misinterpret?—impossible! the world there knew exactly what their intercourse turned upon:—still there might, to be sure, be prying malicious people!—

In short, he continued soliloquising till he heartily repented his precipitancy in declining the invitation of Mrs. Villars; and by the time he reached home,



he had made the determination to frame some plausible excuse for a speedy return to the Priory, and endeavour to get to the bottom of the affair.

The day now came that was to take Agatha from her aunt, who found the pain of parting with her far exceeded what she had imagined; she had not believed she could again have been alive to so much grief.

The child too, who had appeared tolerably reconciled to the idea of going, when she actually saw the carriage at the door, resisted entering it with all her might, and it was by main force Winny finally accomplished the matter.

Neither could Sophia look for much comfort from such accounts as Winny was likely to transmit of her charge, her skill in writing amounting to little more than putting a few words together in a way that required some practice to decypher. Her lady had bestowed pains

upon making her copy sentences that might convey useful information, such as ‘Miss Agatha is well,’—‘Miss Agatha is not well,’—‘She is cheerful;’ &c. &c. And this was all the relief to which she could look forward, beside the hope that Agatha might prove too troublesome an inmate to be long suffered at Rock Castle.

But poor Sophia’s ‘occupation’ was gone,’ and she sunk back into a despondency, and a listlessness, almost equal to what she had experienced in the first months of her widowhood.

Winny had been enjoined to write as soon as she conveniently could; convenience was a term of great latitude with Winny; and so many days had already gone past that, on which Sophia had calculated upon hearing, that she was nearly sick with anxiety and expectation, when a frank of Mr. Arundel’s at length blessed her sight.

The eagerness with which she tore it open could only be equalled by her disappointment, as her eye fell upon the contents.

Winny had never had any concern with letter-writing before, and from her mode of setting about the task, the house-keeper, an elderly good-humoured person, had offered to write it for her; but Winny rejected her assistance with great disdain, saying, "Matam Telmeres had taught her all what was to write in letters, and she could too very well."

Accordingly, with a faithful recollection of her lessons, she wrote as follows:

"Miss Agatha is well—Miss Agatha is not well—Miss Agatha is cheerful—Miss Agatha is out of spirits—Miss Agatha is fatigued—Miss Agatha is not fatigued—we arrived Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday," and so on to the end of the chapter, not omitting a

single sentence she had learnt, till she had filled the page.

The toss of vexation with which Sophia flung the letter from her, however, brought unexpected comfort; for the wind caught and blew open the paper, and showed some writing on the other side; quickly snatching it up again, she read,

“ Aggy write to dear aunty Delmere myself.—I like grandpapa—Grandpapa says, Aggy may play with Cesar—Cousin Arundel won’t let me touch the things in her room—I don’t like her. I want to see dear aunty Delmere and Pompey.”

The pen of Cowper could not have afforded a delight beyond what those disjointed sentences produced. The child was decidedly well and happy, and cousin Arundel’s unwillingness to have her moveables disturbed was no unpromising omen of a speedy return. How Agatha

was become so great a scribe in so short a time was a mystery that would bear some conjectural discussion, for when she left the cottage she could not join her letters—her hand had been guided—but by whom? clearly not by Mrs. Arundel; was it possible her grandfather could have the good-nature to do such a thing? that would give a very different impression from any hopes Sir Edward had held out respecting him when closely questioned. Upon the whole, there was considerable satisfaction extracted from this epistle, curious as it was; and great dependance upon the continued assistance of the same kind hand when Winny wrote again.

Sophia was now sufficiently relieved and revived to be open to the persuasions of her mother and sister, for resuming some of the occupations in which she had formerly taken pleasure; amongst others, she joined Henry in sketching

from nature, which drew her into occasional rides, and improved both her health and spirits.

The following week brought a second letter; for Winny had been ordered to write once a week, and now that convenience was out of the question, she was implicit in obedience; but her genius soared no higher than before; it was an accurate repetition of the former, which, however, became rather diverting, as the addition by Agatha supplied intelligence; but this time it neither related to grand-papa nor cousin, it was about "Cesar, and Will, and Jack, and the poney"—still ending with a strong wish for "aunty Delmere and Pompey."

It seemed improbable, that if grand-papa were the assistant, he should not have suggested something more satisfactory than all this; and Sophia now resorted to an idea she had once before mentioned, of beginning a correspond-

ence with Mrs. Arundel ; but Sir Edward had discouraged it, without explaining his motive, which increased the awkwardness of now doing the thing.

Katty, who was present, came forward with the offer of her services ; “ She should feel no awkwardness about it at all ; for, in the first place, she had a fair opening, from having once seen Mrs. Arundel at a distance in the rooms at Tunbridge ; and an opening was every thing with people who had the knack of letter-writing ; and without meaning to boast, it was what she rather valued herself upon.”

“ Why yes, Katty, to do you justice, I think you may value yourself upon the knack of dilating a little matter over as many pages of fair paper, as any epistolising or novel-writing female of the age !” said Mr. Villars.

“ Thank you, brother !” she replied, with an air of self-complacency ; “ I don’t

often get your good word, so I may hold up my head. And, niece Delmere, I am ready to dilate to Mrs. Arundel as soon as you please."

The offer was good-humouredly declined, and Sophia's embarrassment spared by a communication from Sir Edward Arundel to Mrs. Villars the next day.

He had spent a day or two at the Castle in his way to visit a friend, he said, and imagined it would be satisfactory to Mrs. Villars and Mrs. Delmere, to be assured that Agatha seemed to be perfectly well and happy; and had a little companion in the niece of the housekeeper, who was able to assist her epistolary attempts, and he understood had guided her hand in the letters already sent; this girl would also prove useful in reading to Agatha any admonitions Mrs. Delmere might wish to convey. He expected to be there again in the course of the month, and should then



be able to form a more competent opinion of the child's situation.

This was all that could be obtained for the present; Sophia felt obliged for the attention, and endeavoured to rest satisfied with it.

## CHAP. XI.

IT is presumed that no reader, in the habit of bestowing attention on pages such as these, nor yet those deeper students who search that more copious volume, the book of nature, will for one moment suspect love to have been idle at the Park and the Priory, whilst friendship was raising such commotion in the breast of Sir Edward Arundel.

Far other was the case! and rapid indeed were the strides the treacherous imp had there been making, during the weeks that Agatha's concerns had involved interests so deep and various.

Charles Belmont's devotion became every hour more obvious, nor were the gentle Emily's slumbers unbroken as heretofore.

Mrs. Villars marked the progress of the young man's attachment with the eye of maternal solicitude; he appeared to her in an unexceptionable light; honourable, candid, incapable either of indulging in unmeaning flirtation, or of setting his father's authority at nought. Emily's fortune and connections could only be objected to by very high-minded parents indeed; she conceived her personal merit might not carry much weight with Lord Belmont; but on the whole, she saw reason to conclude, that unless he had decidedly fixed upon another match, his son's choice would be likely to influence his. She was averse to parental interference, unless some very important objection, either to character or morals, called for it; still she could not quite dismiss her fears of Lord Belmont's am-

bition. Emily's silence upon the subject surprised, and rather alarmed her. She, whose heart was ever on her lips! she dreaded her affections becoming too deeply engaged; and resolved to talk the matter over with Mr. Villars.

Mr. Villars had observed nothing of the kind, and gave no sort of credit to its existence; at all events, however, he was clearly of opinion to let things take their course. He reverted to his favourite maxim of 'not governing too much,' which he asserted, should be as carefully avoided in a family, as Adam Smith had proved it ought to be in a state; and indeed to this plan he had pretty faithfully adhered from the hour of his children's birth; for though he had never shown displeasure at Mrs. Villars's interference to check their youthful errors, when she had proved successful, he regularly contended that it would have corrected itself, if let alone; and when she failed in her attempt, he was

very clear it had *much better* have been let alone.

A want of due regulation in the mind of Sophia, was the consequence of his having taken her, as his favourite child, more particularly under his own protection, against the methods Mrs. Villars wished to have adopted to curb the impetuosity and self-confidence to which from infancy she had been prone; but Emily was left to her mother's own management—and assuredly did credit to it. Nature, indeed, had endowed her with a mind of no common cast; her sense of piety might be called innate, because with the same degree of religious instruction which had been bestowed upon her brother and sister, it had taken a so much stronger hold upon her thoughts, as to be the leading spring of all her actions. Self-controul, humility, and a total absence of self-love, were its natural result; she could derive happiness

from the happiness of those around her, though at the expence of her own ; this disinterestedness has been the boast of love and friendship from time immemorial ; but she might say, with the Athenian of old, ‘ what others professed she did.’

It was this humble sense of her own merit that had kept her silent to her mother with respect to Charles Belmont ; she did not conceive his regard for her, to be of so serious a nature as that she should have any thing to impart upon the subject ; nothing but the most unpardonable vanity could lead to the supposition, that because he preferred her conversation to her sister’s and Laura’s, he could deem her worthy to be trusted with the care of his happiness through life ;—but oh ! that whoever he did select might but have it as much at heart as she should !

Charles had, however, for some time been anxiously upon the watch for an

opportunity of fully opening his mind to her; but she was so constantly surrounded by her family, as made it nearly impossible to find one.

A scheme had been in agitation, and strongly urged by Lord Belmont, for his joining a party to visit the Grecian Isles; but relinquished by his lordship, who had lately formed a plan for a matrimonial connexion for his son, with Lady Sabina Ormsby, daughter to the Marquis of Kingsborough. Charles, not yet aware of this change of purpose, felt the importance of declaring his passion to his father, previous to his departure, with a view to avert the danger of an engagement's being formed for him during his absence, too well knowing the difference between Lord Belmont's ideas and his own, upon that head. The conviction of this difference, however, impressed him with a dread that had more than once sealed his lips when on the point of unbosoming himself

to his parent. After several such fluctuations, he had finally resolved to ascertain Emily's opinion first, and be guided by her *when* to speak.

Fortune at length seemed inclined to favour him ; and as he was going towards the Priory he chanced to perceive Emily returning alone from the village, where she had been distributing comfort, and receiving it from the consciousness of the good she had done. Her countenance beamed with more than its usual sweetness.

Belmont trod in air !

He earnestly requested her to go round by the shrubbery, instead of the direct road ; to which she readily assented.

But how was she confounded and overcome when he declared in the most unequivocal terms that the whole happiness of his life was centered in her ! and after having obtained from her silence the



concurrence in his wishes which she could not find voice to utter, he stated to her his irresolutions with regard to his father, expecting a renewal of the urgency for the Grecian expedition, as soon as the visit of the Marquis of Kingsborough's family should be ended ; for it was on the plea of civility to them, that Lord Belmont had proposed the *delay*, as he chose to call it, of his son's departure, not doubting but the effect of Lady Sabina's charms would naturally convert the delay into abandonment of the plan, without betraying the previous arrangement between the 'high contracting powers.'

Emily did not feel competent to forming an opinion in that agitated moment ; but desired time to consult her mother upon it. He was willing to be ultimately guided by her mother's decision ; but still he urged for her own idea ; and as she recovered somewhat more of com-

posure, it struck her that she ought not to let him bind himself by any irretrievable step, such as a disclosure to Lord Belmont would be, when he was going for a length of time among new people and new objects, that might entirely change the course of his own wishes.

These were suggestions to which he could not listen for an instant. ‘ Rivers should run back to their source,’ &c. &c. &c. (as every lover knows) ere change should take place in affection so justified—so riveted as his.

But Emily abided by the reference to her mother, and he was fain to submit.

She now sought Mrs. Villars, with a sense of new-born happiness, almost painful to bear ; imparted to her what had passed, and met with her perfect concurrence in the idea of not suffering her lover to shackle himself by a disclosure to his father before his departure. Charles was not yet twenty-five ; and Mrs. Villars ob-

served, that the various temptations which must assail rich and inexperienced travellers in foreign countries, might so change him, as to make him no longer the man to whom she could be satisfied to entrust her daughter's happiness ; independently of the danger to the steadiness of his own inclinations from the variety of attractive objects amongst whom he would be thrown.

Emily had no apprehension of *his* falling short of perfection ; all her doubts turned upon her own insufficiency to stand the comparison he would have the opportunity of making ; and her determination was, not to be an obstacle to his happiness, in whatever shape he might seek it. Her lover submitted to the award, without subscribing to the validity of the grounds ; and the communication was deferred.

Shortly after this explanation, however, Lord Belmont dropped a hint of not much caring if the foreign tour were

altogether given up, at which Charles had eagerly caught ; in consequence of which it was settled that the application to him upon the important subject should only be delayed till the departure of the visitors now expected at the Park.

## CHAP. XII.

ON the appointed day the party arrived ; it consisted of the Marquis and Marchioness of Kingsborough, Lord Leonard, and Lady Sabina Ormsby, Sir Tristram Traverse, Colonel Morgan, and a train of fashionable loungers, not worthy the honour of being named.

Report had not failed to be before-hand with their arrival ; the beauty and accomplishments of Lady Sabina Ormsby, and her being the destined bride of Mr. Belmont, had been canvassed and settled to the satisfaction of the neighbourhood, from the moment it was understood they were expected at Belmont Park ; but the

unmeaning gossip had passed unheeded by Charles and Emily.

Lady Sabina was, indeed, a person upon whose perfections it could not be expected the world should be silent ; nor was it wished.

Nature had done much, and education more, to make her all that could dazzle and attract ; of a commanding height and finely proportioned—a brilliant complexion and regular features—dressed with the studied elegance and care of the M—— of —— . She stepped with Grassinian grace—sat at her harp in the true Krumpholtz style—eat her soup in Vestris's most approved manner—in short, not a look or motion were other than they ought to be ; her address was gracious and condescending—her language critically correct—she danced—she played—she sung—she painted. Rose Didelot—Cramer,—Tramezzani—Glover—had exhausted their art in her instruction.

What then was wanting to make so

fine a creature perfect? O! not merely 'a heart!' but principle! a well cultivated mind! the golden rule of right! that prompted those virtues of early times, which distinguished a Hutchinson\*, and a Russell†, and infused a soul into their very writings, that will perpetuate their claims to admiration to the latest posterity.

Principle, strongly and judiciously inculcated, might have supplied Lady Sabina's want of simplicity and feeling, and not have proved unuseful perchance in regulating her conduct through life; but what time could be found for implanting so obsolete a qualification amidst the toil of superior accomplishments, that were calculated to place her at the very summit of ton.

Nothing was neglected, however, that could supply the place of more genuine

\* Mrs. Hutchinson wrote the memoirs of her husband Colonel Hutchinson.

† Lady Rachel Russel.

attributes. Tones of commiseration—attitudes—fine eyes cast up—or cast down—sure of their effect every way.

When the Villars's were first introduced to this master-piece of modern education, they were literally dazzled by the radiance she seemed to shed around; but the evening did not pass away without Mrs. Villars and Henry having detected where the deficiency lay.

Emily, indeed, had felt herself shrink into nothing on beholding her; the surmises of the neighbourhood darted into her mind; and if there were the smallest ground for them, could she come into any sort of competition with perfections so unrivalled? Charles, however, soon restored her, not to consequence in her own eyes, (for that she never felt, but to a very satisfactory conviction of her consequence in his, for he devoted himself solely to her, and scarcely appeared conscious of the presence of the beauty.

Lady Sabina came forward to Emily,



with the most becoming affability ; inquired what was the distance from Hurstbourne Priory to Belmont Park ? whether she was fond of walking, or riding ? whether Miss Villars never went to London ? to which last question, receiving for answer, that Emily had no particular wish to go ; her Ladyship said, “ Dear ! how unaccountable ! ”

“ Not wholly,” said Charles ; “ Mr. Villars was ailing at the time Miss Villars received an invitation from Mrs. Valacort, and she is extremely given to make her own pleasure a very secondary consideration.”

“ You give me more credit than I deserve, Mr. Belmont,” said Emily ; “ it is the height of selfishness I give way to in my preference of home.”

Lady Sabina did not think proper to make any farther observation, but a slight depression of the corner of her beautiful mouth, showed her sense of such an avowed want of taste.

When the doors had closed upon the Villars family, Sir Tristram Traverse exclaimed, "What an eminently exquisite creature that Emily is! such a catastrophic contour of countenance! such a seductive softness of eye!—Eh Morgan!" referring to one of his companions.

"Very good!—very good, Traverse!" was the answer.

"Rather too much of the *Penserosa* for me though."

"Better the *Penserosa* than the *Manierosa*," Lord Leonard Ormsby observed, who seldom missed an opportunity of glancing at what so much disturbed him in his sister.

"No air of fashion whatever," lisped out a young lady of the party.

"Miss Villars has such a Madona cast of countenance," said Lady Sabina, "that I should conceive she must have studied Guido."

"Studied!" cried Charles Belmont, "is a countenance to be formed by study?"

“Assuredly,” was the reply; “Lady Hamilton assumed the expression of the countenance, as much as the attitude and drapery of the statues she represented—and by frequent repetition you know any particular expression might become habitual.”

“The Niobe!—I should name the Niobe in comparison,” resumed Sir Tristram, “that bewitching bend of the finely formed head!”

“By heaven!” interrupted Lord Leonard, “Correggio himself might have acquired a new grace from studying her; his Saint Catharine is nothing to it.

“The devil, Ormsby! when did I ever hear you profuse of praise before!”

“You might—if you had ever happened to see me in company with *natural* grace and simplicity before,” returned Lord Leonard.

“Grace!” repeated the lisping Miss, contemptuously, “why she had a beauti-

ful shawl on, and made nothing of it at all."

"Forgive her! on the score of not yet having been in London," said Charles, ironically; "she could never see the Gaiton."

"The Gaiton!" exclaimed Sir Tristram; "ah gad! gabble not of the Gaiton! the peerless Parisot!—carry back your thoughts to her; 'twas she had the felicitous fortune to strike out the shawl dance, for which Vestris himself declared she deserved a statue."

This turned the conversation to that topic of inexhaustible interest, the merits of the opera dancers, which, from diffidence of doing justice to a subject of such high and general importance, or perchance the more author-like fear of betraying ignorance, I think it better to suppress.

Emily Villars was, however, now left at rest for the evening. Laura, though

much annoyed by all these encomiums on her friend, had cautiously kept silence, notwithstanding her power of throwing in an occasional word with very good effect; for none possessed the art of ‘damning with faint praise,’ in greater perfection than she did; but she was fearful of betraying herself to Charles.

Though the habit of criticising visitors was not prevalent at the Priory, personages so conspicuous, and of whom fame had said so much, could not but be objects of peculiar curiosity.

When the family returned from the park, Katty, who had staid at home to play backgammon with Mr. Villars, impatiently exclaimed, “Well! let’s hear all how and about your visit—is this Lady Sabina actually such a piece of perfection as never was seen or heard of before?”

“She is, without exception, the most beautiful accomplished creature I ever beheld!” said Emily; “and so unaffected-

edly obliging!—played and sung at the very first word, and in such a finished style!”

Mrs. Villars cherished in her heart this gratifying instance of her daughter's candour, and perfect freedom from all narrowness of mind, for she painfully marked the impression Lady Sabina's appearance had made upon her in the first moment; nor had she been able herself to avoid a sensation of fear that there might be grounds for the reports in circulation.

“I was struck with her perfect pronunciation of the Italian,” said Henry, “and felt almost inclined to criticise it for being *too* affectedly good;—I mean that altogether there was too much of stage effect in her performance. I think in music, as in dancing, there is a lady-like style of well doing, which I would have stop short of professional perfection.”

Emily took Lady Sabina's defence, and

contended that "whatever was worth doing at all, was worth doing to the extent of one's powers."

"Now Emily, you are arguing against your conscience," replied Henry, with a pleased smile, from being struck by the same observation his mother had made.

"*You* would no more show off in a comic buffo song à la Hamilton, as she did, if you had the power, than you would dance like the Theodore."

"But I am not speaking of myself, Henry. You don't consider the difference between a town and country education. Lady Sabina is accustomed to exhibitions that I should be terrified to death at the very thoughts of."

"But I hope, my dear, you did exhibit though," said Katty, a good deal dissatisfied with all these encomiums, when she hoped to have heard the very reverse, from apprehension of danger to Charles Belmont's affections, whom she had long destined in her own mind as Emily's

future husband. "I hope the Irish melodies were brought forward."

"O no! it was all Italian, and chiefly scientific music, in which Laura bore her part admirably—the Irish melodies would not have suited at all, dear aunt—they were never thought of."

"Never thought of! why, goodness me! where was Mr. Belmont, to let them be forgot? I wish I had been there, I should have taken care to have them thought of, I promise you.—I've no notion of that indeed!—Well, and what are the rest of them?" she continued pettishly, "are they all so charming and so delightful?"

Emily and Henry restored her to good humour, by their lively description of the remainder of the company; but as they are not of sufficient interest to claim much of the reader's attention, we shall pass on to the next morning, when a visit from some of the party gave Katty an opportunity of judging for herself.



It had not been with Charles Belmont's habitual good grace, that he had acceded to the proposal made by Lord Leonard to his sister, at breakfast, of requesting his and Laura's escort to the Priory. He had been much struck by his Lordship's strongly expressed admiration of Emily, though in some degree gratified by it too—and underwent an agitating mixture of feelings, which were a little tranquilised, however, by the recollection that she had paid no sort of attention to him—and as no pretence for objecting suggested itself, he could not chuse but comply, though with a determination of keeping a watchful eye upon him.

Laura was not now sparing of her inuendoes, as on the evening before. Safe from being overheard by Charles, in her walk arm in arm with Lady Sabina to the Priory, she threw out various insinuations calculated to impress her companion's mind with the idea that Emily was not a person likely to excite a serious

passion ; anxious to keep all suspicion of an attachment on her brother's part out of Lady Sabina's thoughts, in the fear of its checking the predilection with which she hoped to inspire her new friend for him. For on that she built for awakening corresponding feelings in his breast ; well knowing his weak side to be vanity, in a smaller proportion perhaps than the rest of the family ; but still, unfortunately for him, bearing too great a share in his composition.

She might have spared herself the trouble. Lady Sabina was so little accustomed to have either beauty or accomplishments brought into competition with her own, that Laura's hints made no impression on her, one way or other. She thought Emily pretty, which was all she ever attended to, and was ready to acknowledge it, because she felt her own pre-eminence, and because people and things glided very lightly over a mind so engrossed by self. To shine was the

object of her life ; and as she felt satisfied she always succeeded, it put her into good humour with all around.

Mr. Villars was struck with her appearance, as no one could fail to be ; and Katty found herself spell-bound, in spite of her predetermination to find fault.

Emily was busy in her flower-garden ; Lady Sabina, with Laura and Lord Leonard, immediately joined her.

“ Do not you tear your hands and your cloaths shockingly, in cutting those roses ?” Lady Sabina asked.

“ Sometimes ; but I guard my hands with pretty strong gloves, and I do not expose very elegant attire to the thorns,” appealing to her coloured gardening gown.

“ But you must get so dreadfully tanned !”

“ I can perceive no very striking evidence of that,” said Lord Leonard.

“ I guess your Ladyship is not very fond of flowers !” Emily said.

“ Not particularly.”

“ You like to enjoy the pleasure of a garden, without the trouble,” Emily resumed.

“ I am not very fond of a garden in any way.”

“ Park, scenery, and woods, probably ! beauties upon a grander scale !”

“ No—I can’t think what people can see to admire in them.”

“ You look with a painter’s eye for more romantic features !”

“ I must confess, I don’t pay much attention to the beauty of country of any description.”

“ Being, as I have understood, an admirable artist, you of course take views from nature ; and the contemplation of nature, I should have thought, could hardly fail of creating interest.”

“ I think it very troublesome to take views ; I am contented to copy.”

“ Are you fond of drawing ?”

“ No, not at all ; I dislike it.”

“ But you must have bestowed much time upon it, to have made so great a proficiency !” said Emily, with some surprise.

“ Yes ; because one must draw so as to gain credit, you know.”

“ Music is probably your favourite pursuit.”

“ O dear no !—I think I hate music more than drawing.”

“ What a self-denying life your Ladyship must lead !” Henry Villars observed, who had now joined them.

“ Time must be got rid of in some way or other ; so it’s no great matter how !”

“ Ladies are apt to find work answer that purpose very well !” said Henry, who occasionally grudged the hours his sister bestowed upon it.

“ Yes ; I wish I liked work !”

“ Henry, you are not fair upon that subject,” said Emily ; “ and I am sometimes inclined to suspect you of envying

us the agreeable resource of employing our fingers in company, in failure of conversation, as Dr. Johnson acknowledged he did."

"Dr. Johnson, when he was told of some unfortunate man, who had committed suicide, said he would have been saved from it if he had known how to hem a pocket handkerchief," Lord Leonard observed.

"Dear! what a vulgar idea!" cried Lady Sabina.

"Your Ladyship, I presume, is fond of reading," said Henry; "the ladies of this generation are bound to be even scientific."

"I should be extremely sorry to be suspected of that!" she replied; "it's what all the men turn into ridicule."

"What, Sabina? reading?" asked Lord Leonard.

"No; science to be sure! you know Leonard, I have no sort of objection to reading, when I have leisure."

“What is your favourite study?” Emily inquired.

“I am not particular as to that—any new thing that Hookham recommends. I leave it to him, with a strict charge, however, to send me only what is very entertaining; for really it is so much the fashion to take people in now, with an expectation of story, and give them nothing but morality from beginning to end.”

“Yes, in truth a lady had need be upon her guard, now a days, that she be not trepanned into knowledge, will-he nill-he, when she is only seeking to while away time in the innocent recreation of a little light reading,” said Henry archly to Laura, who had somewhat separated herself from the others.

“Oh wicked!—I shall not allow you to exercise your wit at the expence of my friend,” whispered Laura, with a smile that was meant to compensate the rebuke.

Word was now brought that the horses were ready.

“That’s a beautiful mare, Lady Sabina!” said Henry.

“I’m glad you think so,” she replied; “I did not so much care about that, as her being grey, because it sets off a dark riding habit to the best advantage.”

“She shows blood too,” he added, scarce able to suppress a smile at the reason given; “are you a stout horsewoman?”

“I ought to be, for I went to Fossard’s three years.”

“Then we may conclude you are fond of riding?”

“One must do like other people; but I can’t say I much delight in it.”

“We had a very splendid ball in this neighbourhood, last week,” said Henry, “worthy of being graced by your ladyship’s presence—it is unlucky for us, you did not come in time for it; and for you, if you are fond of dancing.”



“I was at the R——t’s fête, which I should have missed.”

“We were told the dancing was not good there.”

“I consider dancing as the worst part of a ball.”

“A new and original view of the subject, I should think,” said Henry, who was himself fond of dancing.

“Dear no!—not at all—ask all the tonish men, they’ll tell you it’s odious!—disorders the hair and the dress, and makes one such a figure!”

Lord Leonard, quite provoked with all her dislikes, though he could scarce help being diverted with them too, exclaimed, “I really must, with Mr. Hobson in Cecilia, ask ‘what it is you do like,’ Sabina, for in truth there seems nothing left.”

“I like chess—and making shoes—and playing the solitaire,” she replied.

Chess and shoemaking surprised every one; the solitaire nobody.

But when it appeared in the evening, upon her being challenged to the chess-board, that all her fondness for it consisted in devising a variety of graceful meditative postures, and drawing attention to them by calling upon every body for advice at each move, that wonder ceased.

And when making shoes amounted to nothing more than having them tossing on the table before her, in evidence of the delicacy of the foot they were to fit, and playing with the implements, whilst her maid was in fact the shoemaker—this wonder ceased also.

But the *solitaire* was in fact admirably suited to her natural disposition, which was as indolent as vain ; she could have sat contentedly upon her Ottomane from noon till night, displaying her pretty hands and fingers, in moving about the pegs, and being looked at. Vanity had indeed carried her through the labours of her education ; but happy would she have

been to purchase celebrity at an easier rate—however, it was now secured ; and she was fully determined that whenever the great object of a suitable establishment should be secured also, and parental controul at an end, she would ‘repose upon her laurels,’ and devote her hours to that *sacro santo Far-niente*, she so highly revered in common with the Italians.

Mr. Villars had laid most inconsiderate hold of poor Charles, first by the arm and then by the button, to talk over Malthus’s Population, which interested him deeply ; and he entered into an elaborate argument, to which Charles gave unqualified assent, without hearing one word of it ; his eyes and attention wholly fixed upon Emily and Lord Leonard. Various but vain were his attempts to escape ; Mr. Villars had the subject too much at heart, and finally insisted upon his taking a chair by him, that he might discuss the matter at large.

By which means, all these develope-

ments of Lady Sabina's mind and disposition remained unknown to Charles; for his sister carefully concealed them, and Emily was too generous to expose them; severe only to herself, she was ever ready to excuse the failings of others, and she gave Lady Sabina credit for so much good-nature (which in her eyes covered a multitude of faults), that she did not even judge her as unfavourably as the rest did.

This morning's visit naturally produced an invitation to dinner at the Priory, for an early day of the following week.

## CHAP. XIII.

IT is reasonable to suppose that the habits of gossiping, and the dearth of materials at Belmont Park, must have brought the fair recluse more than once under consideration. Much curiosity respecting her was of course excited, and various plans laid for obtaining a sight of her—of this, Charles Belmont assured them there was no chance during their stay.

Sir Tristram Traverse said, it would be the first instance of his being foiled in any fancy he had set his heart on ; and if any of them would bet him a sufficient sum, he would engage not only to get

acquainted now, but to marry this superlatively superhuman being within the twelvemonth.

“Come! I’ll bet you five hundred upon that,” said Colonel Morgan.

“No, no! curse my capacity, if I’ll be bribed into matrimonial bondage by five hundred!—bet me five thousand, and I might say something to it.”

“Well! I’ll bet you the five hundred, you don’t get acquainted with her during this visit!” returned Colonel Morgan.

“Let’s see!—how many days is it to the October meeting? one—two—three—four! oh! I say done to that!”

“But mind, Traverse! I don’t mean merely a sight of her over her garden paling, or obtaining an answer to some common place question, or getting access to her in disguise.”

“No; I’ll be upon honour; it shall be acknowledged acquaintance, made in my own proper person.—No double dealing on your part though!—no insidi-

ous insinuation! or sly suggestion through a third hand, to put her upon her guard! all fair and above board.”

This was agreed, and done! and done! repeated on both sides.

Laura had promoted the joke by an occasional stimulus of doubt, in the hope that Sir Tristram's success might make mischief with Sir Edward Arundel. Charles, on the contrary, was provoked and vexed at the levity with which Emily's sister was treated, and felt strongly tempted to put it in her power to give Sophia a hint of the matter, especially as he foresaw that Sir Tristram's success would expose the name of Mrs. Delmere to be bandied about amongst all the libertines in town. The sacredness of a bet, however, condemned him to silence, and he could only trust to her extricating herself by her own presence of mind.

Sir Tristram forthwith began an examination of the cottage garden—of its

relative situation to the village ; for there she was known to visit the school of industry, although she at present abstained from going to the Priory. He made acquaintance with some of the children of the cottagers, by means of half-pence judiciously distributed, and learnt that Madam Delmere always heard them say their catechism at the school on a Saturday afternoon.

This being fortunately Saturday, he contrived to place himself where he might, unperceived, see her pass, to guard against the danger of a mistake. Having watched her safe into the school, he patiently awaited her return, taking his station in a narrow lane through which she had to go ; he made her a respectful bow as they met, which she returned by a slight though civil inclination of the head, and he suffered her to pass on,—following at a little distance however. She quickened her pace on perceiving that he did so.



Just as she approached her own wicket he came up with her, and apologising for the liberty of addressing her, requested to know whether a little dog he had seen (describing Pompey) were hers?

“It was.”

“In that case, he begged to caution her—as the alarm of a mad dog had been given in the village, during the time she was at the school.”

“She thanked him, but her dog had not been with her.” And was going into the cottage.

“One word more, he could not help saying—the dog might have got out during her absence—he had seen the little spaniel he described in the very path the mad dog had taken—if he might be allowed a sight of hers, he could ascertain it.”

“She was obliged to him, and would order the dog to be shown to him.” In saying which, with a civil bow, she ab-

ruptly went into the cottage, and shut the door.

The dog was brought; and he charged the servant to say, that he was extremely happy to observe some marks upon Pompey that proved him to have been mistaken, in fearing it was the dog he had seen.

“He had made an opening at least—that was something!—cursed cool too!—d—d dry!—what a queer quiz she must be!—never threw away so much civility before!—devil drub him, if he were not tempted to go to church to-morrow, and study her countenance for a clue by which to shape his course!” For so completely was she enveloped in bonnet, veil, and shawl, that he could form no guess at her features whatever.

To church he accordingly went—but no Mrs. Delmere was there!

Sophia had given little credit to the story of the dog, which she thought she must have heard of in the village. She

sent her servant, however, to ascertain the fact; finding it a fabrication, and judging Sir Tristram to be one of the visitors at the Park, she determined to keep out of the way of being again accosted, by confining herself to the precincts of her own little domain during their stay.

In vain had Sir Tristram lounged about in every direction throughout the day—a severe disappointment!—after having taken the trouble of going to church too! it increased the gloom of the sabbath day idleness at the Park. Two days only now remained for accomplishing his object. Having stretched his length for a considerable time upon the sofa, to ruminate on farther proceedings, he finally yawned out, “Would to heaven those Villars’s had fixed upon this day for their invitation!”

“Why so?” Lord Belmont asked, who just then awakened from *his habitual Sunday evening nap*.

“ Because of breaking into the immensely immeasurable length of a Sunday in the country,” he replied.

“ Immensely immeasurable is good!” cried Colonel Morgan. “ Very good, Traverse!—and new!—we owe you one for that!”

“ Yes, I think it is good,” returned Sir Tristram. “ You are up to us, Belmont? Hey! you take us?”

“ I perceive you have a peculiar taste for alliteration—if that’s what you mean,” answered Belmont.

“ Taste!—it’s a bet!—a cool thousand upon it!”

“ Upon what?”

“ Why upon hitting off good fair alliteration.”

“ But in what way a bet?”

“ Why you shall hear. You know Tom Trivett, I suppose.—Poor Tom! though he’s a dead hand at Latin and Greek, spells his English like his washerwoman.—So we were talking of allitera-

tion, in reference to those new novels, you know.—So says Jack Gibe, ‘ what do you mean by alliteration ?’—‘ That’s a good one,’ says Tom ; ‘ don’t you know what alliteration is ? Why words beginning with the same letter, such, for instance, as *famous philosopher—wretched Richard*—and the like.—That’s alliteration !’ says he. You may guess what a laugh we all burst into ; so then he insisted that sound would mislead any of us.—I took him up, and offered a bet of a thousand, that I would go on for a twelvemonth, without ever making a blunder.—‘ Done,’ says he ; ‘ and here’s Morgan bound to be my inseparable for the time, and to have a bonus if he detects me.’ So that set the whole club a going you see ; and when I strike out a very new one, Morgan puts it down.”

“ Are billiards among the proscribed recreations for a Sunday evening ?” Colonel Morgan inquired, yawning in his turn.

“ Nothing is proscribed that can be agreeable to our guests,” Lord Belmont replied; “ only it is decorous, you know, to set a good example in the country; so we go to church, and refrain from cards; in London, *c’est une autre affaire!*”

“ *Allons donc* for the billiard table!” cried Colonel Morgan; and the whole party followed with great alacrity; when a few cool hundreds won and lost, effectually served to dissipate the tedium of the Sunday evening.

Much inquiry had been made into the state of the bet, but Sir Tristram was not in the humour to satisfy curiosity.

On retiring to his own apartment, he was apprized by his man, that Mademoiselle Victoire was waiting-woman to Mrs. Delmere, a French *femme de chambre!* Might indeed prove an useful auxiliary! So he ordered his servant to appoint a meeting with her, before her lady should be stirring in the morning, having something important to communicate.

Mademoiselle Victoire desired nothing better than important communications ; she had often found them productive, and was punctual to the appointment.

Sir Tristram questioned her minutely upon the true state of Mrs. Delmere's spirits ; her way of life ; the practicability of devising any mode of throwing himself into her way, so as to produce acquaintance.

Nothing could be more unpromising than the answers he received — the *éloignement of Madame pour tout ce qui s'appelle société* was *inconcevable*.

“ Had she no object of interest ? nothing that attracted her attention ? ”

“ *Helas non !* she cared about nothing in the world, except *Mademoiselle Agathe* and Pompey.”

A bright thought now darted across his mind. “ Could Victoire convey Pompey to him ? that would serve as an introduction, and he would restore him in a few hours.”

She hesitated,—“If it were discovered she should lose her place.”

He found means to silence her scruples, and got possession of the dog; which was carefully secured, till the hour when Sir Tristram, with some exulting forebodings, thought proper to appear with him at the cottage.

Katty was coming out from the wicket; at sight of Pompey, she uttered a scream of delight. “Search had been every where making for him,” she said.

“How extremely fortunate that he should just have been in time to recognise and rescue him!—”

“Goodness, sir! what was going to be done with him?”

“That he should beg leave to communicate to Mrs. Delmere herself; it was important she should know it; might he hope to obtain admittance?”

“She made no manner of doubt of it; it stood to reason that her niece would be so excessively obliged to him.”



Sir Tristram now believed he had reached the goal.

Katty led the way straight into the parlour; where, however, Mrs. Delmere was not.

“Where upon earth can she be flown to?” exclaimed Katty. “I left her here not a minute ago!—If you’ll please to be seated, sir, I’ll fetch her to you directly.”

Sophia, rather distrustful of who Katty might be talking to, had peeped through the Venetian blind, and effected a timely retreat to her bed-chamber before they entered the parlour.

Sir Tristram almost felt the five hundred pounds in his pocket; and amused himself with preparing a few additions to the narrative of Pompey’s rescue, little caring whether they were detected next day, so they answered the present purpose. The delay in the old lady’s return, he construed into a favourable omen—the fair widow had possibly wish-

ed to improve her dress for the reception of a stranger—if he could discover the slightest approach to coquetry in her, he should not scruple to let her into the truth of the affair, and perhaps prevail with her to favour the bet, by allowing him to attend her in triumph to the Priory.

He moved towards the glass upon this; and saw no cause to doubt his success, if she had any thing of the woman in her composition at all!—

Sir Tristram had by dint of whiskers and padding obtained the reputation of a handsome man! and although habitually somewhat of the blackguard, he could be the gentleman upon occasion; and he prepared to meet Mrs. Delmere in his very best manner.

Time was given him to con over all these matters to his heart's content.

At length the door opened, and Katty appeared alone.—

“ May I flatter myself, madam—”

“ Bless my heart, sir !” interrupting him, “ I am really so confused and perplexed, I don’t know how to make a proper apology for my niece’s not appearing.—”

“ I beg, ma’am, she may not be hurried on my account ; my time is hers, and—”

“ My patience, sir ! why, if you were to wait till doomsday, you’d be never a bit the better ; I never knew her so obstinate and unreasonable before !”

“ You don’t mean that Mrs. Delmere refuses me the honour of making my bow to her ?”

“ As sure as you are alive, sir, she does !”

“ Were you so good as to inform her who it was ? and for what purpose ?”—

“ As to who, sir, I could not so exactly tell her, not happening to know your name myself ; but I can assure you every word I spoke was to the purpose, for I told her plainly, that a resolution was

one thing, and gratitude was another; and my dear niece, says I—”

“ You certainly, madam, could not have advanced a more undeniable truth,” interrupting her impatiently; “ but may I now request of you just to inform Mrs. Delmere, it is Sir Tristram Traverse who has been so fortunate as to rescue her little favourite, and only entreats one minute’s audience in return, having something of considerable moment to impart.”

“ I’m sure, Sir Tristram Traverse, you speak so reasonably, and like a gentleman, I couldn’t find in my heart to refuse you any thing, and you may command all my powers of persuasion.”

Sir Tristram became rather doubtful of their efficacy; however, he urged the trial.

She soon returned with no better success; “ assuring him it would be as easy to move a stock or a stone—not but what her niece sent her very best thanks to him

for bringing back the dog ;—and having as yet seen only her own family, if Sir Tristram would be so good as to communicate at the Priory what he might have to say, it would be exactly the same thing ;” and she offered to show him the way.

But the disappointed suitor took a cold and abrupt leave, which impressed Katty with much sympathy for his distress and grief for her niece’s ingratitude.

Sir Tristram had met with so few Sophias among his female acquaintance, that he was not prepared for being so completely foiled, and he now became, according to the French phrase, *piqué au jeu*.

One more resource was left him, in failure of this ; and he gave the necessary instructions to his groom for performing his part of the business ; having then seated himself in his tandem—or his tilbury—or his dog-cart—(fear of betraying ignorance checks the assertion

of which it might be,—very certainly, however, the newest and most fashionable vehicle of the day) he contrived his accident to admiration, and had the appearance of having been thrown out, just as he reached the cottage paling, where he very quietly remained lying till his servant returned with the runaway horse, and sent in the deplorable message, concerted between them, of the nearly lifeless state in which he found his master, requesting leave of Mrs. Delmere to have him laid upon a sofa or a bed till surgical assistance should be obtained.

How far Sophia might have been the dupe of this, is not easy to say; a lucky circumstance having saved her from the trial. Happening to have mounted her garden steps to tie up some creepers, she had seen the whole manœuvre—satisfied herself it was Sir Tristram—that he had voluntarily jumped out of the carriage—that the horse had only run on, when the reins were thrown upon his neck, to the

turning where the groom was stationed to stop him ; in consequence of which, she was prepared, when the doleful tidings were brought her, to answer that a sofa should be brought out to convey Sir Tristram to the Priory, where so much better care could be taken of him than in her confined habitation.

Sir Tristram very rapidly came to life upon this suggestion, abused his servant for a blockhead in making such a serious business of what only required cold water and a little patience ; and then having relieved his disappointment by ‘curses not loud but deep,’ he gave up his wager for lost.

He was too sulky, however, to acknowledge it, when Colonel Morgan put him in mind this was his last day. “The Ides of March are come, but not yet past,” said he ; “ stay till we are fairly off to-morrow morning.”

This was the day for dining at the Priory. As the company were lounging upon the

lawn before dinner, Sir Tristram seizing Lord Leonard's arm, began to recount to him his various discomfitures. Interested in the subject, they had imperceptibly strayed into the village path, when suddenly interrupting himself, he exclaimed, "By heaven! fortune favours me at last!—there she is!—now for a bold stroke!—"

It was in fact Sophia, who knowing the whole party to be engaged at the Priory, had ventured to the school, and was now returning.

They were already so near that Lord Leonard had no means of escaping from Sir Tristram's grasp, who holding him fast, and urging him forward, said, "Allow me, madam, to introduce Lord Leonard Ormsby to you—who must now do me the same favour," he would have added, but Sophia interrupted him with "Thank you, sir, for naming a protector to me! I rely upon the known character of Lord Leonard Ormsby for



saving me from insulting persecution !” —and with a very quick pace she retraced her steps.

Sir Tristram completely disconcerted, would, however, have attempted to follow her, had not Lord Leonard forcibly detained him. “Impossible after this !” he cried, “the acquaintance was to be voluntary, you know — your wager is fairly lost—but you have given me an introduction I may see cause to rue—upon my soul, I never beheld such another woman !”

Lord Leonard was indeed planet-struck ; he had been much pleased, and what some might have called captivated, by Emily’s simple and mild graces ; but here, with greater brilliancy of beauty, was a dignity of countenance and manner unequalled. Her spirited appeal to his protection too ! had something bewitchingly romantic in it !—altogether he was taken by surprise, and one short moment was productive to him of some lasting consequences.

Sophia had really felt alarm at the pertinacity and boldness of Sir Tristram's pursuit; and the claim she laid to Lord Leonard's protection was suggested by the favourable representation Emily had given of him in contrast with the manners of his companions.

The following morning lighted the Baronet and the Colonel on their way to Newmarket; and not a little disappointed was Victoire when she found Sir Tristram gone. "*Ah, bon dieu!*" she exclaimed contemptuously, "*ces messieurs Anglais n'en savent-ils pas plus long en fait de galanterie?—C'étoit ma foi bien la peine de voler le chien!*"

## CHAP. XIV.

ON the next day, a letter was put into Sophia's hand from Mrs. Arundel ; with eager anxiety she opened it, and scarce dared trust her eyes, as she read, " That Agatha proved so entirely unmanageable as to oblige Mr. Arundel to request Mrs. Delmere would resume the charge of her ; which if she declined, would leave him no option but to make inquiry for a boarding-school at which to place her."

With joyful speed she set forth to communicate the intelligence at the Priory, being now relieved from the fear of meet-

ing the most objectionable part of the fashionable set.

Lord Leonard, whose mind was completely filled with the image of Sophia, felt anxious to exculpate himself from a participation in Sir Tristram's impertinence; but having been informed that no visitors were admitted at the Cottage, he simply paid the mark of respect of leaving his name there, and proceeded to the Priory with his explanations, not wholly divested of a latent hope, that through Emily's interest he might obtain leave to make his personal apology to her sister.

What was his delight upon entering the drawing-room to find Mrs. Delmere herself there!—she accepted his excuse obligingly, but expressed strong displeasure at having been made the object of a wager.

There was something quiet and rational in Lord Leonard's appearance that pleased Sophia, and led her not to con-

sider him as an obstacle to the solicitude she now felt to form her own opinion of Lady Sabina Ormsby. She feared Lord Belmont's ambition, and was alarmed for Emily's peace of mind. She did not know enough of Charles to judge how steadily he might resist his father's authority. She *did* know enough of Lord Belmont, from her mother's representation, to apprehend that the consideration of his son's happiness would but slightly influence his views; and she determined to join the party that was engaged to the Priory for the next evening, which only consisted of the younger set. Lord and Lady Kingsborough being gone to pay a visit in the neighbourhood.

And accordingly a very gay society assembled at the Priory, of which Sophia for the first time made one.

It had been no small gratification to Sir Edward Arundel, on his return to Rock Castle, to find he had augured so justly of the result of Agatha's visit; he

arrived just in time to avert all idea of the boarding-school, and smooth every difficulty respecting her return into Hampshire; to which he undertook to answer for Mrs. Delmere's entire acquiescence. He would himself take charge of her conveyance, without awaiting the answer to Mrs. Arundel's letter; having saddle-horses with him, he could give up the chaise to Agatha and her maid; and he appointed their short days journeys, so as to sleep where they did, by which means he assured himself of their safe progress.

He arrived with his young charge on that very afternoon, and his spirits not a little exhilarated with the thoughts of the happiness he had secured to Mrs. Delmere. He had so entirely laid aside the idea of caprice having had any share in his non-admittance at the Cottage, that he had upon this occasion only considered of the best means of marking his perfect conformity to the propriety

of it, and that was, to send the child and Winny straight there, and alight himself at the Priory; and, indeed, he also deemed it a handsomer mode of proceeding, than forcing his way in, under the plea of a kindness done to the little girl.

He was announced, therefore, at the Priory.

If his hilarity received an immediate check from being unexpectedly ushered into a gay society, some of whom were utter strangers to him, it was soon converted into absolute displeasure when he beheld Sophia. “Astonishing!—could he believe his eyes?—was Delmere’s disconsolate widow in the midst of this numerous and fashionable set?—here was a change!”

Scarcely had he sufficient command of himself to stop, and impart the occasion of his visit.

Sophia came up to him with a look of pleasure and solicitude, “Did he know the fortunate result of Agatha’s visit?”

Could he tell when her return might be expected?"

With the most chilling reserve, he replied, "He had had the honour of being entrusted to conduct her, and she was at this moment at the Priory cottage."

Sophia heard no more, but flew out of the room; and ere any of the shawls or bonnets that were sent after her could overtake her, had held her darling to her heart, weeping tears of joy over her recovered treasure. Agatha was frantic with delight, and Winny scarcely less so.

"Unaccountable medley of feeling and levity!" thought Sir Edward. "Alas! how deceptious my first impression of thee!—"

He stood absorbed in thought.

Mrs. Villars approached him. "I cannot suppose it to have been unpleasant tidings that took my daughter so abruptly from us," she said; "her countenance bore an expression I have not seen in it



this long and many a day ; some very good news of her little niece, no doubt !”

“ Agatha is safely restored to her care, madam ; I undertook the office of being her conductor, and having acquitted myself of the task, I have the honour to wish you a good evening.”

Laying her hand upon his arm, Mrs. Villars said, “ You must not leave us so, Sir Edward ! Mrs. Delmere will, I am persuaded, return, when she has seen Agatha, and be disappointed if she does not find you here to receive her thanks.”

“ Mrs. Delmere owes me none, madam,” was his dry answer. “ The child is of sufficient importance in our family to claim my services, whenever they may be wanted. You will, I hope, excuse my stay ; my spirits are not equal to scenes of gaiety, I congratulate you upon Mrs. Delmere’s being so soon restored to them ; and must beg leave to make my bow.”

Mrs. Villars let him go without farther opposition. She saw that he was disturbed; attributed it to his having been unexpectedly ushered into so large a circle, and made no doubt of his putting up at the inn, and their seeing him again in the morning.

Nothing could be more remote from the intentions of Sir Edward; he ordered his chaise the instant he had made his escape from the Priory; but his postilion being out of the way, he set forward on horseback, leaving orders for his chaise to follow him.

Mr. Villars was engaged at chess in the library, during Sir Edward's appearance and disappearance, and only stopped to finish his game before he wheeled himself into the drawing-room to welcome his guest.

But behold! the guest was gone!

"I thought Sir Edward Arundel was here," he said, looking around.

“ He is but just stepped after Mrs. Delmere to the Cottage, I fancy,” cried Katty ; “ he’ll be back presently, I dare say.”

“ I believe you are quite mistaken, sister,” Mrs. Villars said ; “ he seemed disturbed at our gay circle, and has retreated, I imagine, to the inn.”

“ Well, well !” returned Katty significantly, “ we shall see how that may be.”

This was not lost upon Laura Belmont, whose pleasure at his entrance had been succeeded by chagrin at his abrupt departure, which she could with difficulty conceal. The surprise, indeed, was general, and had scarcely subsided, when Sophia returned to apologise for her own sudden disappearance, anxious also to obtain information respecting Mr. Arundel’s farther views upon Agatha, and the situation she had been in, whilst at Rock Castle.

So entirely had her mind been engrossed by the child, that she had not observed the peculiarity of Sir Edward's manner; and when Mrs. Villars mentioned it, she instantly attributed it to the same cause her mother had done, made no doubt of his breakfasting at the Priory next morning, and applied herself to drawing Lady Sabina into some sort of conversation. She was soon satisfied of her deficiency in that respect, and well pleased moreover to see the evident insensibility of Charles, to the brilliant accomplishments that were called forth in the course of the evening.

Aunt Katty did not fail to introduce Emily's Irish melodies; the simple pathos of which were strikingly contrasted with the scientific bravura's of Lady Sabina and Laura, and produced their effect upon Charles and Lord Leonard to Katty's heart's content.

"Is it possible," Lord Leonard asked Emily, "that yours should be 'native

wood notes wild,' as Mrs. Katharine suggested, without any instruction?"

"Far from it," replied Emily, "my sister has been my instructress—I only have had no Italian master."

Lord Leonard's eye turned upon Sophia, with a look of admiration; which, however unheeded by her, did not pass unobserved.

"Shall we ever again be indulged with any of my old favourites, Sophia?" Henry asked.

"When Agatha comes to want musical instruction, perchance you may," was the answer, accompanied with a faint attempt to smile, which showed her brother that he had touched a painful string, and he checked Lord Leonard's wish to urge the request.

But Laura, who to attract Henry had learnt some of the little duets with Emily which he alluded to, immediately offered to join her, instead of Mrs. Delmere. They had not gone half through one of

them before poor Sophia was obliged to leave the room ; it was the first time those notes had struck upon her ear, since her loss ; they had been the delight of Delmere, and she could not stand it.

Henry, conscious of being the inconsiderate cause of her distress, hastened after her, and attended her to the Cottage ; where, by judiciously turning her thoughts again to Agatha, he in some measure counteracted the mischief ; and unwittingly transferred the sleepless night he feared having ensured to his sister, to the disappointed Laura, who, feeling she gained no ground with him, seeing Lord Leonard devoted to Mrs. Delmere, and Sir Edward Arundel again giving her the slip, vowed revenge upon her pillow, in some shape or other.

## CHAP. XV.

At a very early hour of the next morning, Agatha burst into her aunt's room, jumped upon the bed, and threw her arms about her neck, with a fervour of affection, that in some degree atoned for its boisterous effusions.

“ Was this your usual morning's salutation to your grandpapa and Mrs. Arundel ?” Sophia asked.

“ My goodness, no, aunty ! I didn't love 'em well enough—granpa didn't like a noise, and old coz was so cross !”

“ But you were not always making a noise before you went there !”

“ No, because you used to let me do something I liked better.”

“ And did nobody think of any thing you could like better there? did nobody teach you any thing?”

“ O yes, indeed, aunty! Tom the groom taught me to ride Poney, and how to rise in the stirrup; and the names of all the horses.”

“ And was Tom, groom, your only instructor?”

“ No—Sir Edward Arundel when he was there—he learnt me the prints in them pretty little books he gave me.”

“ And what were they about?”

“ About the Bible—and he used to want me to read in 'em myself—and then when I couldn't, he told 'em me—I liked that.”

Surely, thought Sophia, I have greatly mistaken this man! or ‘sweet have been the uses of adversity’ to him!

As she went on questioning the little girl, she saw cause to shudder, indeed,



at all the mischiefs to which she had been exposed, as well as much room for gratitude to Sir Edward, who had so kindly brought her away.

With a consciousness of more goodwill than she had yet borne him, she was hastening to get ready for the Priory breakfast, where she expected to find him, when a message came from Mrs. Villars to inform her that he was gone.

Surprised, and not very well pleased, she now delayed her purpose to a later hour ; before which, however, matters had again assumed a different aspect.

Sir Edward had ridden to Andover, and stopped there in the expectation of his chaise following him, and taking him another stage that evening of the road he was pursuing. Having waited for it in vain, he remained where he was ; and when the lad appeared with it in the morning, he inquired with some displeasure into the cause of delay.

Will pleaded his claim to forgiveness

on the score of its being the first offence of the kind he had ever committed, and he said, "as it was all along o' drinking Madam Delmere's health he had been a little overtaken, he hoped his honour would be pleased to overlook it."

"And why Mrs. Delmere's health in particular?" Sir Edward asked, rather struck with the look that accompanied these words.

"I don't know your honour—maphap on account o' my being your servant like—I hope no offence—"

"What has your being my servant to do with drinking Mrs. Delmere's health?"

Delighted to have his tongue set loose (for the melancholy that had seized upon Sir Edward had precluded all unnecessary communication, even with his own valet, which was the reason of his total ignorance of the reports so authoritatively circulated in the neighbourhood of the Priory) Will now proceeded to inform his master of all he had been told ;

in confidence, indeed ; but that the ‘potations deep,’ which had deprived him of the use of his limbs, had also obliterated from his memory ; and he ended with saying, “ All the servants was a looking for the second year of Madam Delmere’s mourning being up like, for the marriage ceremony ; seeing they was sure as madam would never go for to lay by her affliction for the Colonel, till her two years was fairly out, because she were so much more worser in her grief, nor widow ladies be now a-days ; and that was what made her so mortal mad with Mamosel when she axed her about it like.”

Sir Edward was confounded. — Will proceeded to petition for being her ladyship’s body coachman like.”

But his master, who had suffered him to run on, merely from being too much engrossed by his agitation to think of stopping him, now angrily interrupted his speech, with a peremptory command

to let him hear no more of such nonsense, and dismissing Will, he betook himself to ruminate upon what he had heard.

Here, then, was the solution of the Priory cottage door having been shut against him! so far from caprice it had been the most laudable attention to propriety that had actuated her! the gossiping neighbourhood had misconstrued his visits—and he!—good God! he had been the unconscious means of injuring her fair fame; so far at least as bringing the consistency and sincerity of her grief into question. Good God! he to do her such a wrong! what could possibly be done to repair it?—

For now that all idea of her original ill treatment was completely set aside, he could not but severely reproach himself with the displeasure to which he had given way—indeed it soon became very clear that her mixing with that gay circle could only be with a view to counteract the impression of her being accessible to him

alone—her breaking away from him as she had done, was probably to be ascribed to the same cause! and judiciously calculated to show, that their intercourse referred entirely to Agatha. His own strange conduct now stared him in the face! what must she, who ever made propriety her first consideration, think of his flying off as he had done?—Think of it!—she might not know it!—how lucky he had gone no farther than Andover!—it was but remounting his horse and returning to the Priory, and by general attention to the family efface the impression of any thing particular being meant to her.—Nay, if it could answer that purpose, it might even be well to ask to be introduced to the Belmonts—his health was so different to what it had of late been, that he found himself quite equal to any sacrifice that consideration for Delmere's widow might require.

Accordingly, he ordered his horse

forthwith ; bid Will stay where he was with the chaise, till his return ; and rode back with all speed to the Priory.

He re-appeared there just as the riding party had been arranged for the morning, by all the young set in council assembled, and the horses were leading to the door. Apologising to Mrs. Villars for his abrupt retreat of the preceding evening, he ascribed it to the unequal state of his spirits, but declared himself so conscious of the rudeness he had committed, that he could not rest satisfied without making his personal excuses—said something civil about having formerly had the honour of being slightly known to Mr. and Miss Belmont, and his wish to avail himself of it to obtain their introduction of him to Lord and Lady Belmont.

All this was so much more extraordinary than his behaviour of the last evening, as to create general surprise, and admit of various interpretations, according to the wishes or previous opinions of the company.

Laura saw a favourable omen to herself in it; for concluding him apprised that Sophia did not yet visit at the Park, the compliment could have no reference to her, she thought. With much readiness she therefore answered for the pleasure Lord and Lady Belmont would have in making his acquaintance, and invited him to join the party that had just engaged to spend the evening with them.

To this proposal he acceded, with unusual graciousness, not doubting Sophia's being included; he was now also invited to join the riders; but as Mrs. Delmere was not likely to be one of them, he thought he had done enough, and begged to be excused.

As they rode off, Mrs. Delmere with Agatha in her hand, appeared in the opposite direction, and experienced no slight surprise on seeing Sir Edward come forward to meet her; but quickly satisfying herself that there had only been some mistake in the supposition of his depar-

ture, she advanced towards him with a look of sweetness and complacency perfectly enchanting.

Agatha, with whom he was now become a great favourite, ran forward with a hop, step, and jump, and throwing her arms about his neck, gave him a hearty kiss.

“I conclude, Sir Edward has been used to these violent attacks on your part, Agatha, or you would have frightened him!” said Sophia.

“No; I learnt that of Betsy—she always did so when her dad came home.”

“When you go back to Rock Castle, then, I hope you will teach her better.”

“Why, am I going back?” with an alarmed air.

“I hope not, for some time to come,” replied her aunt, casting a look of apprehensive interrogation on Sir Edward.

“Not, I dare say, till Mrs. Delmere has had full time to instruct you how to improve the manners there, instead of



copying them," he returned with a smile, which quite set Sophia's heart at rest upon the subject.

Mrs. Villars soon took the child away with her, and Sir Edward then hastened to tell Mrs. Delmere, that she was likely to retain undisturbed possession for a year or two; as Mr. Arundel proposed passing the ensuing summer between his two other estates; of which one lay in Scotland, and the other in the West of England; and he had very little doubt, after what had occurred in the present visit, of persuading him to admit a governess of Mrs. Delmere's choice, which would avert much mischief when he should again lay claim to his granddaughter.

Sir Edward dwelt with complacency on one circumstance in this visit, which had proved consonant to Mrs. Delmere's wishes. Mr. Arundel's intention of keeping Agatha ignorant of her great expect-

tations from him, until she should be of age, if he lived so long.

This was, indeed, an unexpected coincidence, which equally soothed and gratified her.

The conversation was so interesting, and he exerted so much ingenuity in prolonging it, that Sophia had no notion of the time it had continued, till the return of the riding party drew her attention to the hour; she then with great simplicity, expressed her surprise at having been beguiled into forgetfulness of an appointment she had made at home; and seeing Agatha at that moment come out of the house with Katty, she called the child, and somewhat abruptly walked away with her.

Sir Edward looked disconcerted by the suddenness of her departure; Laura Belmont riding up to him, said, "Was it alarm at our approach that drove the fair recluse so precipitately back to her cell?"

Sir Edward's late habits and opinions had been so adverse to gallantry, that he was not very ready with an unmeaning civil speech — so muttering something unintelligible, which he hoped might pass for such, he unpolitely enough moved away from her.

Laura, before disturbed at the tête à tête, was now piqued at the apparent rudeness, and addressing herself to Katty, observed, “They seemed in such earnest conversation, as we caught a glimpse of them in coming down the hill, that I fear we may have unseasonably interrupted it.”

“Dear bless you! no, their conversation must have been out and out again, by the time it has lasted—for my niece Delmere came just as you were setting off, and I've been keeping little Agg from interrupting them this hour past.”

“That was kind, Mrs. Katharine; you probably concluded, then, that matters of deeper interest were on the *tapis* than

what related to Agatha?" returned Laura, with a very penetrating look.

"Why, as to that, Miss Belmont, I am not in their secrets, you see; so I can tell no tales; but they have my hearty good wishes notwithstanding—so I shall say no more," replied the discreet Katty.

She had said enough to satisfy Laura however, who suddenly rode after her party to conceal her mortification.

Mrs. Villars had been backwards and forwards during the conversation between her daughter and Sir Edward; but happened to be out of the way when Sophia went; by which means she had missed securing her return to dinner. Katty became a most willing messenger upon the occasion, but, as it sometimes happened, she did not prove a successful one; for she was so full of her allusions to the 'morning's confab,' as she called it, that they drew Sophia's attention to the construction it might give rise to with

others; and she positively refused to meet Sir Edward at dinner.

Katty was provoked beyond all bounds; and when Sir Edward, on setting down to table, expressed his disappointment at Mrs. Delmere's absence—her displeasure broke forth.

“ I'll assure you, Sir Edward, I am as much disappointed as you can be—and I can't say but what I am angry into the bargain, for I expounded every argument I could think of to convince her—”

“ My dear sister,” interrupted Mrs. Villars, “ you must make allowance for her unwillingness to leave her darling the first day of her return.”

“ My patience! why what was to hinder her bringing her with her, you know! besides, she didn't say a word about that—it was all because of the nonsense—”

Emily colouring to her very fingers ends, with dread of what was coming, hoped to turn the tide of her aunt's thoughts by suddenly breaking into her

speech with an inquiry into the contents of the covered dish before her, and desiring to be helped to it.

But this only effected a momentary respite ; the subject had too strong possession of Katty's mind, and she resumed, " That nonsense you know—"

Mr. Villars happening for once to be alive to what was going forward, abruptly, and with some emphasis, said, " I think Katty, my daughter may have the privilege of accepting or declining our invitations—they are not issued with the royal stamp of a command !

" No, to be sure, brother," replied the impenetrable Katty, " only in this case, you know, all proper pains has been taken to demonstrate—"

" I'll tell you what, Katty," rather angrily, though wishing to turn it off in pleasantry ; " leave demonstration to philosophers, and let women be content to ' eat their pudding and hold their tongue.' "

Katty, half frightened, though wholly unconscious of what could provoke her brother's displeasure, was, however, awed into silence ; but Sir Edward had caught enough of her meaning to show him, that this refusal of Sophia's was of a piece with his being denied admittance at the cottage ; and her nice regard to propriety challenged his utmost approbation. She had treated him with frank and flattering confidence in the morning—she had evidently been pleased with many of his opinions—but he clearly perceived that nothing could induce her to brave the animadversions of the world, which ought to be the ruling principle in every truly feminine mind. His admiration of her increased every hour.

Sir Edward formed his judgments of her with a true lover-like blindness, lending all his own delicacies to the admired object. Sophia was but too apt to set the opinion of the world at defiance, where it at all interfered with her

own—and had certainly done more that morning, towards confirming the reports in circulation, by her inadvertence to the hours that had passed in their *tete-a-tete*, than could have arisen from her dining at her father's, where she now so frequently spent the day. However, between his disappointment and his satisfaction, his regrets and his admiration, and above all the prospect of seeing her in the evening, Sir Edward was restored to a state of animation, that made him highly agreeable to the whole family.

When it appeared from the inquiries made after Mrs. Delmere at the Park, that she had not yet visited there—the sense of disappointment was again counteracted by Sir Edward's approval of her consistency ; and he said with energy to Emily, “ There is a dignified propriety about Mrs. Delmere, that must command the highest respect and admiration of every thinking mind ! ”

Laura overheard him, and determined



to remove this impression at least, ere long.

When the card-table was placed, Sir Edward readily agreed to cut in, to relieve himself from the necessity of conversing with Laura and Lady Sabina ; for Charles had drawn Henry and Emily to a distance, to look into a new publication—and Lord Belmont had engaged Lord Leonard in some political question, which they were discussing as they walked up and down the room.

Lady Sabina, after tossing about her shoemaking implements for some time, without finding what she said she wanted, betook herself to her solitaire board ; and Laura contrived to draw her embroidering frame so forward between the card-table and the work-table, as to be equally audible to both ; and then, seizing upon a moment of perfect silence, she said to Sabina, affecting an under tone, as if wishing not to be heard, “What an intolerable mope your brother is become, ever

since Sir Tristram Traverse's introduction of him to our fair recluse!"

"Yes, he's over head and ears!" was the careless reply. "I shall never get them all off this way—yes—I never saw him seriously in love before!"

Laura was aware her end was answered, for Sir Edward immediately renounced. Unwilling Lady Sabina should say any more, she called to Charles, to bring the book to the work-table, reproaching him with the unfairness of keeping it all to themselves.

"Pray move your work-table to them," said Lady Belmont, "if you are going to read—we can't tell what we are about as it is—Sir Edward Arundel has just given away the odd trick and lost me the rubber."

Sir Edward pleaded his having so long lost sight of cards, and begged he might cut out—which he accordingly did.

Here was an overthrow of all his high-wrought veneration!—Sir Tristram Tra-

verse!—one of the most trifling!—most contemptible of fashionable profligates! not only acquainted—but on a footing of sufficient intimacy to introduce Lord Leonard!—”

His reverie was interrupted by an appeal from Lord Belmont, on the subject under discussion between him and Lord Leonard. Sir Edward gave an answer so wide of the mark, as convinced them his thoughts were otherwise employed—his eye was anxiously bent upon Henry, watching his laying down the book to draw him away, in the hope of obtaining some elucidation of this harassing discovery.

But ere the book was well closed, Lord Leonard had seized upon Henry's arm, and taken him into the adjoining apartment. Emily might certainly satisfy his curiosity as well—and he took the vacant seat next her; but he could not please himself in giving a sufficiently

disinterested form to his question, to guard his motive from her penetration—so he sat silent and abstracted.

Laura saw the mischief work, and triumphed in her success.

Conscious, at length, of his inability, either to converse or obtain the information he wanted, he asked Emily in a whisper, “Whether he should be deemed guilty of rudeness if he walked home? finding himself unwell.”

“By no means—politeness is too well understood in this house, for ceremony to exist with it,” was her reply; and Sir Edward slipped away; determined to wait no longer than the following morning, for a solution from Henry of what so strongly militated against the consistency he had so highly prized.

But Henry had agreed to go out shooting with Lord Leonard and Charles Belmont, and was off by day-break.

He had now but one resource, and at

the breakfast table, Sir Edward hesitatingly ventured to name Sir Tristram Traverse, as understanding him to be an acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Villars.

“ They could scarcely consider him as such—he had indeed dined there, but merely as one of Lord and Lady Kingsborough’s party.”

“ Mrs. Delmere’s acquaintance with him was probably of longer date,” Sir Edward said.

“ Mrs. Delmere has no acquaintance with him at all.” Mrs. Villars replied ; for the story of the wager had been suppressed at the Priory by Henry’s desire, knowing the vexation it would occasion to his mother ; so that, except the adventure of the dog as reported by Katty nothing was known there upon the subject.

This denial was too much !—Here was an evident deception !—Good heaven !—could it indeed be that he was again in

danger of becoming a dupe to female art ? For he had, in various occurrences of the foregoing day, seen cause to suspect himself of sentiments somewhat verging towards that passion he had so solemnly forsworn ; nor had he felt all the alarm that might have been expected from the discovery whilst the object was so pre-eminent : but now !—merciful powers ! he could not break away too soon, from the snare he saw spread around him ! for busy thought quickly reverted to Katty's admonitions betrayed by Agatha.—What mattered it how far Mrs. Delmere might or might not be privy to that idea ? since it was now but too evident, that while she was acting the inconsolable, and affecting to lead a life of perfect seclusion, she admitted the profligate Sir Tristram to introduce to her a companion, who by the very circumstance of their intimacy must naturally be supposed as great a profligate as himself.

As these thoughts passed in rapid succession through his mind, his darkened brow bore testimony to their agitating nature; but inequality of spirits was so readily accounted for in him, that no surprise was occasioned by the haste in which he called for his horses, and disappeared the moment breakfast was over.

As he was mounting his horse, Katty was just returning from the cottage with Agatha, who had Mrs. Delmere's dog in her arms.

Running towards him, she cried, "Here's Pompey, Sir Edward! see, here's Pompey!—did you ever see such a beauty? and do you know poor aunty would have lost him if it hadn't been for such a good-natured gentleman, that brought him back!"

"Aye!" said Katty, "I'm sure I shall love that Sir Tristram the longest day I have to live, if it was for nothing else but his kindness in bringing back that little dog."

“Good morning to you, ma’am!”  
said Sir Edward abruptly, and galloped  
off, triumphant over his own weakness.  
All was now as clear as day-light—And  
‘Richard was himself again.’



## CHAP. XVI.

WHILE Sir Edward Arundel was enjoying his fortunate escape, Lord Leonard Ormsby was entangling himself in his own toils, for assuredly Sophia was innocent of all intention to ensnare him. Not a day passed without his contriving some means of throwing himself into her way ; she had occasionally suffered herself to be drawn into the rides and walks of the youthful set, and Lord Leonard never failed to drop in *accidentally* at the Priory, whenever she was there ; but the cottage remained inaccessible, and to Belmont Park she still refused to go.

When the time came for the departure of the visitors, Lord Leonard with an aching heart consulted Henry upon the possible means of keeping up some intercourse with the family till the period of Sophia's emerging from her seclusion, should authorize his tender of himself and fortune to her acceptance, without danger of offence to the delicacy and propriety of her feelings.

Henry, anxiously wishing to beguile his sister of her grief, by so eligible a second choice, entered warmly into his views ; and with the concurrence of Mr. and Mrs. Villars, invited him to spend his Christmas at the Priory, engaging in the meanwhile to use his best endeavours to draw her speedily back into that world she was so calculated to adorn.

Laura had succeeded so much beyond her hopes, in driving off Sir Edward, that she saw Lord Leonard slipping through her fingers with tolerable composure, resolved to apply herself during the re-

mainder of her stay in the country to turning the whole force of her artillery upon Henry Villars.

Lord Belmont had no sooner parted with his guests, than he sent for his son into his library.

Charles obeyed the summons with eager step and a beating heart; it was the very thing he was about to solicit, in the hope of obtaining his father's sanction to his love.

"I have sent for you, Charles, with a view which I should think you must have anticipated," Lord Belmont began, "although you have thought proper to keep aloof from that concurrence in my wish, which might have been expected by such a father, as I believe I have proved myself to you."

"I have most anxiously been waiting for an opportunity of unbosoming myself to you, my dear father, trusting to your long experienced kindness—"

"I do not like your exordium, sir,"

interrupting him ; “ I foresee that my views and yours may be dissimilar, I therefore desire to take the lead ; and have to inform you, that the Marquis of Kingsborough and I, have agreed upon cementing our mutual political interests, by an union between you and Lady Sabina Ormsby.”

“ Good heaven ! my dear father !”

“ I desire I may hear no romantic stuff about prior affection—with your affections I have no concern ; marriage in our line of life has higher objects in view ; Lord Kingsborough’s interest united to mine, will carry every thing before it. That is the first point ; but I am no unreasonable father, expecting you to center your felicity in a wife of my selecting—all I desire is, that you should behave to her as a gentleman ought to do ; keep up her consequence and your own, by the respect you show her ; treat her as her birth entitles her to be treated, and place your affections where you see proper.—I

shall never inquire into or interfere with them."

"Can it be my father that would thus separate my conjugal duty from my heart's dearest interests? surely, my lord! you forget that 'tis Emily Villars, who ——"

"I do not forget, sir," sternly interrupting him, "that your boyish predilection has been suffered to pass unheeded—at least unreprieved—but is paternal indulgence to have no bounds? if your brother had lived I might have been weak enough to deem a gentlewoman with a fortune of ten thousand pounds, a sufficient justification to the world for giving my consent to what you had set your foolish heart upon—but the case is widely altered; you are become the sole prop and support of an ancient house—an English earldom may eventually be the reward of my faithful services—the Marquis has power to forward this important object.—Your becoming his son-in-law, would ensure his utmost exertion.

—Heart, you see, is here wholly out of the question.”

“ Too surely, I see heart is out of the question indeed !”

“ None of your sarcasms, sir !—a less indulgent parent than myself might tell you, *you* can have no heart who show yourself insensible to beauty and perfections so unrivalled as those of Lady Sabina, and insist upon your devoting yourself wholly to her ; but I treat you as my friend—I lay before you the means of increasing your father’s consequence and happiness, and leave you to dispose of your heart as you may see fit.”

“ Good God, my lord ! could I be such a villain as to attempt to retain the affection of Emily Villars, whilst I gave my hand to another ?”

“ Don’t misconstrue my words, sir ; I am not urging you to do any such thing. A boyish passion is easily subdued when the effort is seriously made—*that* is what I expect of you !—absence will facilitate

the matter. Go abroad as you had agreed to do, and your thoughts will soon be weaned from Miss Villars ; and then—do as your father has done before you ! I offer you no mean example. Do you imagine I had any predilection for Lady Belmont, when I married her ? and you see how respectably we have gone on.”

The distress of Charles was inexpressible ! never could he have conceived his father to be so utterly destitute of principle and feeling, as he now found him—and it steeled his resistance.

“ I cannot be induced, my lord, to act a part from which my whole soul recoils, whatever example I might have to plead ; every feeling of my heart is Emily Villars’s ; and so devoted—I cannot give my hand to Lady Sabina Ormsby.” This was spoken with a firmness that surprised Lord Belmont.

“ Are you aware, sir, of the consequences of this refusal ?”

“ I am aware of being wholly in my

father's power as to fortune—but I shall not be biassed by such a consideration."

"Romantic fool! oh! what have I done to be cursed with such a son?" and he gave way to an emotion that astonished Charles, who had never before seen him thrown out of the studied coolness of his character. It affected him to tears, and he exclaimed, "O my father! say not so! call me not a curse! command me in any sacrifice but this! and see the alacrity with which I will obey you."

"Ridiculous!" somewhat recovering himself, "command you in any thing but that on which my political existence—which in other words is to say my life, depends. — Excuse my blindness, most dutiful sir, in not rating the compliment to the height you seem to intend—but be assured, in return, that in every matter of perfect indifference you shall also find me a most conceding father."

"O my lord! you cannot—indeed you cannot see how my heart is torn, or



you would not treat me with such severe irony!"

"Well, Charles!" resumed Lord Belmont, in a more conciliating tone, after a pause of some length, "I see we must come to a compromise. I will agree to leave the matter as it is, for the present; provided you go to the continent for six months, without forming any previous engagement with Miss Villars; and at your return, we will reconsider the question."

Warding off the immediate difficulty, seemed to Charles so great a point gained, that he readily acquiesced in the proposal; which the insidious politician only made to gain time, well aware of his son's too pliable nature; upon which, indeed, he had relied rather too much in this abrupt opening of the business; but which he well knew judicious management had never failed to bend to his purpose.

"One condition I annex to my present forbearance," Lord Belmont added,

“that Miss Villars be not informed of the conversation we have now had.”

“Miss Villars is aware, my lord, that I only waited an opportunity of opening my heart to you!—”

“I repeat, sir,” interrupting him, “that my adherence to the compromise depends upon your honourably fulfilling this condition.”

Charles bowed submissive, and left the room.

Distressed and perplexed, he shut himself into his own apartment, to deliberate upon what might best be done; to venture upon infringing the condition, was too hazardous after his father's threat!—to see Emily, and conceal any thing from her, was so disingenuous—so unlike his former conduct—so out of his power; in short, he could not think of it. He struck out a medium—Laura was Emily's friend—through her, enough might be imparted, to show he had spoken with doubtful success—and that his father's

final determination would only be obtained at his return from the continental excursion, which was now again urged upon him ; in addition to which, Laura should be charged to renew his vows of eternal constancy, &c. and of Lady Sabina not a word.—

And having settled this in the best way he could devise, he came to the resolution of proceeding immediately to London, with a view of still catching two of the party, with whom he had before engaged, and whose departure had been delayed.

Laura entered into his feelings with every testimony of the deepest interest ; engaged to repeat all he could wish, and more ; professed the warmest attachment to Emily, “ who certainly,” she said, “ was amiable to a degree ; and had moreover the advantage of being his first love, which naturally accounted for what, under other circumstances, might have appeared rather surprising.”

“What was that?”

“Your total inattention, not only to Lady Sabina’s pre-eminent beauty and accomplishments, but to the evident partiality with which she seemed to view you.”

“Partiality to me, Laura!” with a look of astonishment, “I don’t think we exchanged a dozen sentences, beyond what common civility required, during the whole time she was here.”

“I did not accuse you of having flirted with her, brother—I know you are incapable of it—you evinced your partiality for Emily but too clearly—I only wish it had produced the effect it ought to have done!”

“Surely, Laura, you must dream!—Lady Sabina appeared to me as perfectly indifferent to any thing I said or did, as to every thing else around her.”

“To every thing else around her, I grant you—but be it so!—let it pass as my dream—I ought in strict propriety

to have suppressed all allusion to the subject.—So now give me my lesson for Emily accurately, that there, at least, I may say neither more nor less than just the thing I ought.”

The lesson was repeated over and over again, with reiterated vows of eternal—unchangeable affection at every close; and Laura having engaged for the most scrupulous fidelity in her repetition of it all, Charles left her to seek his father, and impart his determination of setting out immediately.

Nothing could be more consonant to Lord Belmont's views; he embraced his son with unusual warmth; gave him unlimited power to draw upon him during his tour; and taking him to Lady Belmont's dressing-room to bid her farewell, never lost sight of him, till he saw him fairly off in his post-chaise on the London road.

Laura lost no time in acquitting herself of as much as she thought proper

to transmit of her brother's commission ; which she accompanied with all the expressions of sympathy and regret suitable to the occasion.

Emily testified deep feeling—but no surprise. “ I was not unprepared,” she said, “ for Lord Belmont's dissenting from his son's choice ; and from his general way of thinking, there can be little room for hope that he should relinquish any views of his own in favour of his son's wishes.”

“ But Charles bid me assure you over and over again, that no consideration should make him recede from his engagement to you.”

“ There exists no engagement to me, Laura, but in your brother's own heart ; and I should be unworthy of the opinion he has formed of me, if I could take advantage of it to his prejudice.”

“ There is no saying,” Laura replied, “ how far affection for his now only son may soften my father's heart.—”

“ My dear friend,” interrupted Emily, “ I perceive your tender concern for me, makes you desirous of softening this stroke ; but depend upon it, we do not know the worst—his going away without seeing me, convinces me he was afraid of betraying what would give me pain,” (for Laura had carefully concealed the prohibition which sealed Charles’s lips). “ But he does not know,” continued the generous girl, “ how firm I can be for the benefit of those I love—for Charles is very dear to me, Laura.—I don’t deny that,”—a burst of tears now relieved her full heart.

“ Dear, dear girl! how you distress me!” exclaimed Laura, putting up her handkerchief to conceal the want of tears, which she imagined Emily would expect to flow in sympathy with hers.

But Emily’s mind was engrossed with her own honest purpose. “ Be assured,” she added, as soon as she could recover herself, “ that I will be no cause of dis-

union in your family!—I will set your brother the example of submission to whatever may be his father's will."

"Sweetest Emily!—what heroism!—oh that poor Lady Sabina could emulate it!"

This was thrown out, as an additional stimulus to Emily's romantic flights, as the worldly-minded Laura deemed them. She might have saved herself the trouble—it passed unnoticed—Emily's guiding principle was far beyond Laura's ken; her thoughts were at that moment addressed to the Being from whom she ever sought support—and after a short silence, she said, "Will you forgive me, dear Laura, if I retire to my own room, to seek the calmness I wish to recover, before I make my mother acquainted with what you have imparted?"

"Your mother!" repeated Laura in some dismay, "what occasion is there to acquaint your mother?"



“ My mother is as myself—I have no reserves for her.”

“ Only take care she do not embroil matters, by unseasonable interference,” said Laura, fearful her own part in the affair might either be betrayed to her father, or her duplicity to Charles; “ you know my father is so tenacious—”

“ Trust to my mother’s dignified forbearance, dear Laura!—she will seek to strengthen her daughter’s mind, but not to force her upon any family.”

Laura laughed in her sleeve at both mother and daughter, and with a tender embrace bid her beloved friend adieu.

## CHAP. XVII.

LORD Belmont on the following morning summoned his daughter into his library.

“Laura!” he began, “I think your friend Emily stood the test of rivalry with the beautiful Sabina—she was not overlooked,—” he added, with a scrutinizing glance.

Laura had a delicate game to play—she was upon her guard. “Emily had probably no idea of coming into competition.” She said.

“Are young women apt to think little of themselves?”

“I believe Emily’s humility to be real, my lord.”

“ Aye, no doubt—she is your friend, and therefore all perfection—so your brother also thinks, I presume.”

Laura was silent.

“ Very cautious, Laura! — possibly bound by the sacred tie of confidante-ship?” ironically.

“ I know of no tie that should prevent my answering any question you choose to put, my lord.”

“ As to your brother, the matter is plain enough; but answer me candidly: is the girl desperately in love with Charles?”

“ She certainly does not attempt to disguise her partiality for him.”

“ Partiality!—that’s the delicate female term, is it? for the forward advances of an ambitious girl grasping at an establishment above her pretensions!”

Laura was as desirous of foiling any pretensions of Emily’s as her father could be; but very unwilling to be committed in the affair, both on account of Charles

and Henry. She now perceived she might safely leave it in her father's hands, and abide by her supposed friendship. "Surely Emily cannot be taxed with forwardness of manners!"

"Well! we won't discuss that at present—I am willing to allow for the blindness of friendship, and there was a time that I might have seen the connexion in a different light; but the death of Augustus has made so important a change in the situation of Charles, as must supersede individual partialities. He now becomes a public man, you know."

"But would not my friend's charms and qualifications do credit to any situation?"

"Divest yourself of prepossession, Laura; and say, whether she can really be put into competition as a daughter-in-law with Lady Sabina Ormsby!"

"Lady Sabina Ormsby!" with a scream of surprise; "can there, indeed, be such an alternative for Charles?"

“ Neither more nor less than the Marquis of Kingsborough’s daughter!—Lady Sabina Ormsby’s hand actually courts your brother’s acceptance; and he is so insensible both to his interest and his duty as to hold back!”

“ The world, to be sure, cannot be expected to see with his eyes, or with mine!”

“ The world could deem it little short of madness; and I should conceive that you, Laura, would not make your brother’s true interests, and the advantage of your family, subservient to a silly girlish friendship, which is never considered as any thing more than a name to cover a confession of reciprocal follies. I expect a very different estimate of duties from you!”

“ Indeed, my lord, I must acquit my friend of meriting any such accusation; nothing like folly ever fell from her lips.”

“ Not what romantic girls may call so,

perhaps ; she abounds in sentimentality, no doubt !”

“ I have heard her express the most generous disinterested sentiments.”

“ Aye—they are easily enough expressed ; but would she act upon them, think you ?”

“ I have heard her assert, that true love can inspire strength to make any sacrifice to the happiness of its object.”

“ Assertions cost nothing.”

“ I cannot doubt her sincerity, if brought to the proof.”

“ Upon this ground, Laura, it would be an act of friendship in you to put this boasted magnanimity to the test, by pointing out to her the advantages that would result to the object of her disinterested attachment.”

“ Who, me, my lord !—her friend !—try her so cruelly !”

“ You think then she would shrink from the test !”

“ ’Tis I who shrink from it—I could not command my feelings—I might betray !”

“ True enough ; you might betray what would defeat—Well, you have, however, given me an insight into her character, which raises her in my estimation ; and I hope I shall find her deserving of the high opinion you have formed of her. I will save you from all irksome interference—but upon condition, Laura, that what has now passed between us, be not even surmised—the slightest indiscretion on your part, would provoke a displeasure you are little aware of.”

Laura promised the most rigid adherence to the injunction.

And so ended, between the father and daughter, this agreeable specimen of ‘ *ruse contre ruse*,’ though not of ‘ *guerre ouverte*.’

Lord Belmont was persuaded he had drawn his daughter into furnishing him with data, by which to circumvent her

friend; and Laura was satisfied with having pointed out the mode of proceeding to her father, and made over to him the hazardous task which might have involved her with her brother, and injured her in the opinion of Henry Villars.

While this dialogue was going on at the Park, the artless Emily had laid open her whole generous heart to her mother, and received the most unqualified approbation of her sentiments. Dignity of mind was a predominant feature in the character of Mrs. Villars; and she had imparted it undiminished to her daughters: disinterestedness is its natural concomitant; but blended with these, Emily had that pious humility so beautifully portrayed in her countenance, which suggested to Lady Sabina the appropriate comparison, so frequently misapplied in the world, of the Madona.

She had not been able to go to her mother the evening before, as she had intended upon quitting Laura; the struggle



had proved too severe in the first instance; but a night of uninterrupted meditation—for sleep had not broken into it—produced a calmness of purpose, which, with the additional support of Mrs. Villars's just arguments, now restored her to nearly her wonted serenity of countenance, if not of heart.

She took the earliest opportunity of imparting to Sophia her conversation with Laura; and simply and frankly professed her determination in consequence of it.

Sophia had seen deeper into Laura, than Emily's partiality and ignorance of guile had permitted her to do; her manoeuvres with Lady Sabina, as well as with Henry, had not escaped Mrs. Delmere; she had observed her manners differ according to the company she was in; she thought she could detect some sinister purpose in the present communication—some trick to part Emily and Charles.

“ I think, Emily, you are premature in such strong determinations !” she said.

“ Can I hesitate a moment, Sophia, when his advantage is in question ?”

“ What proof have you that it is ?”

“ Laura could not deny the interpretation I put upon his going away without seeing me.”

“ Laura *did not* deny it certainly—how far she *could not*, may be another point.”

“ Can you suspect her of want of friendship ?”

“ In very truth, Emily, I do not confide in her sincerity ; the adulatory court I saw her pay to Lady Sabina Ormsby disgusted me ; and if in Lord Belmont’s withheld consent there be any covert plan of gaining time for drawing Charles’s affections to Lady Sabina, Laura, depend upon it, would be an active agent in the business.”

“ Dearest Sophia ! affection for me, makes you unjust to her—there can be no grounds for taxing her with duplicity !

—at any rate, however, supposing Lord Belmont to have such views, can I ever come into competition?”

“Perhaps not, in the eyes of the ambitious Lord Belmont!—but surely Charles would be unworthy of your affection, if the temptation of such worldly advantage could induce him to forego the object of his tenderest and first love!”

“I believe he will not readily resign me—but it is for me to set him the example.”

“Good heaven, Emily! of what?—of sacrificing the first blessings of life to the paltry consideration of rank and fortune?”

“No, Sophia!—but of filial submission.”

“Consider what a parent, and what a man, Lord Belmont is!”

“He is Charles Belmont’s father.”

“*You* owe him no submission as such.”

“Not at this moment—in my present

situation ; but how could I reconcile myself to becoming his daughter, by concurring in his son's disobedience, and introducing discord into his family."

" Dear Emily ! this is surely too fastidious."

" It is what my principles suggest—and I have no other rule of action."

" So you will devote the man you love to wretchedness, for the sake of an unprincipled, unfeeling father ?"

" Not for the sake of the father, Sophia !—but for the sake of the son's domestic happiness—they are an affectionate united family, and I could never make him amends for all that he would forego."

" But that turns upon the strength of his passion for you ; if he prefers you to all that his family, or the world have to offer, then—"

" Then," Emily broke in, " I should forfeit my claim to his love by the very acceptance of the sacrifice. I believe

his preference for me to be founded on his opinion of my character and principles ; and if they could become subservient to my passions, instead of being their guide, must it not sink me in his esteem ? and without that, of what value would his love be to me, if, indeed, love can survive esteem in a pure mind such as Charles's."

" And can you possibly suppose that, devoted to you as he appears to be, he can ever find happiness with such a puppet as Lady Sabina ?"

" There, again, your partiality to me makes you unjust, dear Sophia ; but we assume the intention towards Lady Sabina—we do not know it—all we do know is, that Lord Belmont objects to me, and that is sufficient for me to act upon."

" Emily ! is it in nature to be so wildly romantic ?"

" *You* are the romantic person, Sophia, who would sacrifice all to love.—I throw

higher considerations into the scale, filial duty—”

“ Oh Emily !” interrupting her, “there is but one consideration that ought to weigh — one perfect happiness in this life !

‘ *Credi pure à me, che l’ho provato.*’ ”

Tender regrets now crowded upon Sophia’s mind, and she was drowned in tears ; but Emily remained unmoved by her arguments, though not by her distress, in which she participated with more feeling than her sister had shown for her in this discussion.

Not that the severe test to which she had put Emily’s firmness, arose from a want of sensibility, but of consideration. Sophia had ever acted upon the doctrine she preached ; energetic, enthusiastic, but infirm of purpose, from being too easily led by her feelings only. She was eminently deficient in that unerring light which illumined the pious mind of her

sister, and ever kept her steady in action as wise in determination.

Had Colonel Delmere lived, Sophia might have seen full cause to rue the self-confidence and pertinacity with which she had overpowered her parent's reluctance to consent to her union. His bravery and devotion to her, blinded her better judgment; and his heroic end prolonged the delusion, and saved her from the mortifying discovery of the laxity of principle that had marked his conduct before their union; for, however strongly he had expressed himself, and felt for his sister's disgrace, he was but one instance more among the many who do not scruple to carry that dishonour into the family of others, which they will sacrifice their lives to avenge in their own.

## CHAP. XVIII.

It was with some surprise that Emily found Lord Belmont prepared to be of the riding party, when she and Henry called for Laura the next day.

They had not gone far, before Laura exclaimed, "What delightful turf for a canter!" and set off with Henry at full speed.

"I have so seldom mounted my horse of late," said Lord Belmont, "that I shall confine myself to my butter-and-egg trot, if this pace be not irksome to you, Miss Villars."

"Not in the least, my lord."



“To tell you the truth, Miss Villars, I had a view to the pleasure of a *tete-a-tete* with you in joining the party this morning, when I found your sister was not to be of it.”

Emily bowed her head, in silent expectation of what was to follow.

“I apprehend you may have been somewhat surprised at the sudden departure of my son for his continental tour, after it had been apparently relinquished.”

“I was, my lord.”

“You certainly, Miss Villars, were entitled to a very full *exposé* of his motives—and indeed I should have expected it from the natural frankness of his character; but we sometimes find ourselves entangled in unforeseen difficulties—and a reluctance to give pain, may injudiciously close our lips, when openness ought to have been deemed an imperious duty—”

“I believe, my lord, Mr. Belmont knows

me too well, to doubt of my firmness in hearing whatever communication he might have had to make."

"Possibly it might be the agitation of his own mind, in finding his present duties at war with all his former prepossessions—of *yours*, Miss Villars, *there* can be but one opinion; it is made up of nature's choicest materials—and in any conflict to which you might be exposed, there could be little doubt of the issue."

"Your lordship does me honour, I hope I shall not fall short upon trial."

"My son, I believe, Miss Villars, paid that tribute to your charms, which he must have had neither eyes nor heart to have withheld."

"Will your lordship forgive my taking the liberty to interrupt compliments so very unnecessary and so much above my desert, by the frank avowal of the partiality with which Mr. Belmont has honoured me, and my own grateful sense of it—but no engagement had taken place between

us, that need have raised the smallest difficulty on his part, to inform me of his father's disapprobation ; for this is what I apprehend your lordship is leading to—and I am quite prepared to meet it."

"Disapprobation ! is a word that can never be applied to Miss Villars by *me* at least—there was, indeed, a time, when my most hearty concurrence would even have outstripped the application for it—but the change in Charles's situation—the importance of which his services may be to his country, by the increased political consequence of his family—"

"I entreat you to say no more, my lord ! it is quite sufficient for me to know that Mr. Belmont's duties separate us—true happiness can only be found in the conscientious fulfilment of them ; and his happiness has ever, in my mind, superseded the consideration of my own."

"Spoken like the generous disinterested woman I expected to find when I entered upon this distressing topic," ex-

claimed Lord Belmont, gratified beyond his hopes, and laughing like his daughter in his unfeeling soul, at the silly girl whose romantic nonsense blinded her so completely to the advantages she was relinquishing.

“May I trouble you, my lord,” resumed Emily, “since Mr. Belmont has not appeared to place the same dependance upon my way of thinking, to inform him that I earnestly conjure him to act up to his duty in every respect; and that, to hear of the happiness I shall ever pray may be his, will be my highest gratification through life. And now, with your leave, I will endeavour to overtake Laura and my brother,” added poor Emily, who had exerted herself almost beyond her own power; for, added to the severe trial of fortitude in this formal renunciation of Charles, she deeply felt his supposed distrust of her generosity in leaving such a communication to be made to her by others.

Lord Belmont had succeeded beyond his expectation ; and however he might smile at what he deemed Emily's folly, he could not, upon reflection, but feel surprise and admiration of the superior mind that could in one and the same moment, with such frank simplicity, avow the attachment, and so disinterestedly relinquish the object of it. This actually was beyond what he had believed to exist either in man or woman ; but it made no change in his plans.

He now conceived that a very trifling deviation in stating this conversation to Charles, might convert disinterestedness into apparent indifference, which would pique his pride, as well as disappoint his tenderness, and be a very probable means of turning his thoughts to Lady Sabina. He lost no time, therefore, in making the communication. But it did not exactly produce the result looked for.

The indifference dwelt upon, was so very unlike the sentiments which the

candid Emily had so naturally avowed to Charles, that the finesse proved its own foil—and Charles, satisfied this could not be true, went on to doubt the whole, declaring he would give no credit to any thing, but what he should hear from her own lips upon the subject; and the departure for the continent having again been delayed, he urged for one decisive conversation with her before setting out.

Lord Belmont had now to impose a task upon Emily, which not even his own unfeeling mind would have wished to subject her to; but he had seen her fortitude—he trusted this interview would set the business finally at rest with regard to her at least. And he had the cruelty to ask it.

Emily had paid dear for her assumed firmness in the conversation with him; a low nervous feverishness was creeping upon her, though unacknowledged to those about her. Never thinking, however, that she had done enough, whilst

any thing remained undone, she acquiesced in the proposal; feeling also that 'the bitterness of death was past,' in what she had already gone through, she strengthened her purpose with the hope of opening Charles's eyes to the call of duty.

But when poor Charles appeared before her, with pallid countenance and anxious looks, she felt the trial would again be more severe than she had foreseen; her awakened sensibility enfeebled her resolution; she had believed him acquiescent in his father's will, and only wanting to be satisfied of her concurrence—she now found that he had relied upon her affection, for assisting his opposition to it—and the task became arduous, beyond what she had yet encountered; for, unconsciously to herself, she had received a degree of support from offended dignity in the idea of his ready dereliction—Laura having designedly omitted the circumstance of the prohibition, and Lord Belmont having artfully suggested a

mortifying motive for his son's having refrained from seeing her.

However, there was no change in Charles's actual duty—and she resolutely resisted her feelings.

He strenuously urged the unfairness as well as unreasonableness of his father's conduct, in having first countenanced their attachment, and then expecting to break it, the moment it no longer suited his views.

Emily contended for filial submission.

“Was there no age of emancipation from it?”

“No age at which the obligations of gratitude ceased,” she thought.

“But surely, at twenty-five, a man might be allowed to judge, and to determine upon what would be most conducive to his own happiness!”

“Have we a right to put happiness before duty, when they are opposed to each other? or rather, can we find happiness in transgressing our duty? can happiness



be obtained at the expence of conscience?"

"Emily! your argument would hold against the contemplation of a wicked purpose; but here, where I would introduce into my family so bright an example of virtue—of all that is to be admired and loved in a female mind—You would offer a pattern to their imitation, such as—"

"Would never be imitated—even if I could deserve the encomium you are now passing upon me.—Be assured, examples are never laid to heart that are forced upon any one; envy and dislike are the natural result."

"You could not reason thus coolly, Emily, if you loved as I do!"

"It is excess of the most disinterested affection, that enables me to combat your arguments, and discern the true road to your happiness, Charles."

"Consider to what parents you would have me sacrifice you!"

"And what shall entitle us to sit in

judgment on our parents? Call to mind the anxious days, the sleepless nights, our infancy and childhood has cost them—the thousand claims to our gratitude long before we can even be sensible of the benefits we receive—‘never can they give your patience greater exercise than you have done theirs;’ and when we come to those years, which can alone repay the debt, can we feel authorised to throw it off the instant it interferes with our selfish enjoyments?”

“You have a right to be enthusiastic on the subject of filial piety, who have such parents as are seldom met with—but do not compare them with mine!”

“O Charles! you were conscious of your duties when your heart was open to its own just and natural feelings; it is your passion that reasons now to mislead you. O trust to those good feelings! call back your filial piety! and let me take pride in your virtue, in your noble self-sacrifice.”

“What is there, I would not do, save this—to raise myself in your eyes, Emily?—but to cut myself off from every hope of bliss, by this accursed union with Lady Sabina—”

“Oh Charles!” she exclaimed, concealing her face with her hands—for this was a stroke she had not yet sufficiently prepared her mind for.

“My Emily!—my loveliest Emily! you cannot urge me to such a sacrifice as that!”

“A moment’s time, Charles, to recover myself—I was not quite prepared for this!”

“I am then still dear to you! oh, think of the dreadful misery of a heartless union!”

“Spare me! spare me, Charles!” interrupting him; “respect the weakness I have betrayed! do not degrade me in my own eyes, by attempting to work upon it!”

“Degrade you, Emily! can you consider your love for me as degrading?”

“Do not wilfully misunderstand me, Charles; the degradation is not in the attachment, but in suffering it to mislead me. I cannot at this trying moment urge what I ought; but so much resolution is yet left me, that I can unequivocally declare my own fixed determination—*against your father’s consent I never will be yours*; and now farewell!” she abruptly added, and broke from him before he could recover from the stupefaction into which her last words had thrown him.

As she rushed through the drawing-room, she said, “Dearest mother, go to Charles! he wants soothing.”

Sophia, who had been anxiously awaiting the issue of the conference, perceived she could scarcely utter the words; and followed her to her room, where she threw herself upon her knees, beside her couch, in such a state of emotion as made

her wholly unconscious of her sister's presence.

It was long ere this never-failing restorative produced sufficient effect to enable her to raise her head—and then, the anxious affectionate look with which Sophia sat watching her, brought a burst of tears to her relief—and she threw herself into her sister's arms.

“Dearest Emily! you have over-tasked your self-denying powers, and will fix your own misery for life.”

“No; the struggle is past—but it has been more severe than I expected. I shall soon recover composure now—is he gone?”

“I believe so—I heard my mother just now in the room below, and I think she would not have left him.”

“Then darken the room, and leave me, dear Sophia!—I will lie down for an hour—and you shall see me at dinner as calm as you can wish.”

But poor Emily had over-tasked her

physical powers, if not her mental ; for the state of suffering she had for some days experienced produced so much debility, as to cause the present exertion to have brought on an alarming increase of fever ; and instead of appearing at dinner, as she had promised her sister, she was confined for that and many following days to her bed.

When Charles returned to the Park he was met by Laura, who expressed much kind solicitude to learn the particulars of what had passed ; he was scarcely able to give them, but reproached her for not having imparted to Emily his father's prohibition ; he conceived the pain she had expressed at his want of candour and confidence in not having stated to her himself his father's objections, as arising from a feeling of resentment in her breast which had strengthened her resolves against him.

Charles Belmont's mind was inadequate to the full appreciation of

Emily's; resentment had no influence over it.

Laura excused her want of recollection to impart so material a fact, on the score of her agitation and divided feelings. "For, well as she loved Emily, she must confess she could not help feeling deeply interested also for Lady Sabina."

This premature recurrence to Lady Sabina, did not just then produce its intended effect—his mind was too completely absorbed in his distress; but as he remained to await Emily's convalescence, his sister's frequently renewed hints at length led him to express wonder at having been so completely blind to what seemed to have been so apparent to others; for Lord Belmont was not deficient in suggestions to the same effect, though more dexterously guarded than those of his daughter.

Charles having in vain sought to gain over Mrs. Villars and Sophia, to favour his ardent wish for another interview with

Emily, was finally compelled to forego the hope of it, and determined to seek relief from absence.

Fain would Lord Belmont have persuaded him to turn his thoughts at once to Lady Sabina, and give up the continental tour ; but this was so strenuously resisted, that it became prudent to give way, lest too great precipitation might again lose the ground that now appeared to be gained.



## CHAP. XIX.

WHEN Mrs. Villars imparted to her husband the cause of Emily's illness, he was all astonishment. "I really never observed any thing particular between them," he said; "and have always attributed the frequency of Charles Belmont's visits, to my political opinions being more congenial to his own than those of his father."

Mrs. Villars could not forbear a smile. "Do not you recollect my expressing uneasiness to you upon the subject, some time ago, and doubting whether I had not better put Emily upon her guard

before her affections became too deeply engaged?"

"I am very clear *that* was better let alone at any rate—interference only makes bad worse, in most cases; but I protest I can't call to mind any marked attentions on his part—and you know he always asks for a sight of *my* newspaper."

"I wish poor Emily had seen cause to place his visits to that account—her health would not have suffered this severe shock."

"Her health! severe shock! God bless my soul! has she actually made herself seriously ill? Women are so prone to deceive themselves on these subjects! Do, for heaven's sake, let us send off directly for doctor ———." And ringing the bell with great violence, he ordered a man to go on horseback with all speed for the doctor.

Which having done, his thoughts reverted into their habitual channel, and

he returned to the political disquisition in the *Edinburgh Review*, which Mrs. Villars had interrupted ; to which she prudently left him, unwilling to force the matter upon his attention so as to produce a quarrel with Lord Belmont.

Emily's recovery was followed by an apparent calmness, that might have satisfied eyes less observant than those which daily rested anxiously upon her faded cheek and failing appetite. A family council was held, to which the physician was summoned, who recommended her removal into the milder air of Devonshire for the winter.

As yet the fine autumnal weather invited to daily rides, from which salutary effects might be expected ; and which Sophia, with Agatha upon a pony by her side, regularly attended. They were one day suddenly overtaken by a heavy shower, and were wet through before they could reach the shelter of a barn, belonging to a farm-house that lay a

stone's throw out of the road, about half-way between Up, and Down-Hurst-bourne.

The farmer's wife, with much civility, came out to make an offer of such change of apparel as she could provide, while their habits should be drying at the fire.

The danger to Emily of catching cold was too important, for Sophia to hesitate a moment in accepting the offer, and they alighted and went into the house.

While the business of changing and drying was going on, Agatha, who had been peeping in at every door she could find, finally disappeared.

Sophia, in her anxious care of her sister, had not missed her ; but when they were ready to go, she looked round, and inquired of the dame what could have become of her ?

" She will have got to Madam Carstairs, I reckon," said the dame.

" And who is Madam Carstairs ?" Sophia asked.

“ It’s an old Scotch widow lady and her daughter,” was the answer ; “ that have lived here some weeks ; but they don’t much seem to like to be seen or known ; so my master, he says, he doesn’t well know what to make on ’em—and he’s afeared they mayn’t be here for no good—French spies belike !—howsever, I see no harm in ’em, except the old one may be a little crazed by times, when she wants to pass for quality-like, and be called My Lady, whereof her daughter only calls her mistress—but the daughter is a mighty pretty-behaved kind of body ; so I persuade my master not to mislest ’em.”

“ I fear, then, Agatha may have intruded very improperly,” said Sophia. “ Pray, ma’am, be kind enough to fetch her away.”

With Agatha came a very interesting genteel-looking woman, between thirty and forty, who, in something of a foreign accent, expressed admiration of the child,

and hoped the ladies might not suffer from their wetting. Her eye fell on Emily as she spoke; and she added, "That young lady did look so delicate she could not help to have fears for her, and must beg to recommend one little cordial, a little *crème de Noyau*!—perhaps English would like better shrub!—indeed, I must hope you will not refuse!"—She continued, as they declined each proposal, "I see the shiver that is beginning of cold."

Emily was indeed chilled, and it was only from unwillingness to give trouble, that they refused the offers, which were, however, persisted in with such evident cordiality as to overcome their scruples, and a little hot wine and water was finally accepted.

"Now one favour more—you will come into our apartment to drink it—my mother will make you good welcome—this little love has won her heart quite."

"Do come, aunty!" cried Agatha,

“ she is such a nice old lady !—and talks so funny, you can’t think.”

The stranger led the way to her mother’s apartment, where a venerable, fair-skinned, benevolent-looking woman, of near eighty, sat in an arm-chair, in a coif and pinnars, with a close black dress buttoned up to her chin, and her foot wrapped in flannel, raised upon a stool.

She bowed with her head, and pointed to her foot as an apology for not rising to receive her visitors.

“ I have engaged this charming invalid to take some of our wine and hot water, mother, to save her to get cold from being so wet.”

“ Hoot Marget ! ye maun gar the braw lassie tak a drap Usquebaugh—it ell due her mickle mair gude,” was the reply.

“ You are surprised,” said the daughter to Sophia, “ to hear my mother’s good broad Scotch—my bad accent did make you expect French—did it not ?”

Sophia, though colouring with a sense of her own ill-breeding in having betrayed by a start, her surprise at the old woman's uncouth phraseology, playfully replied, "Certainly, mother and daughter do not appear to have studied language in the same school."

"Deed, madam, that's just Marget's misfortun, though ye'll may be think I might ha' learnt better wha ha' resided at Orleans ever since the forty-five; but my peur Drumfichen wad na let me sully the purity o' my dialeck aw's 'gen I were ashamed o't. He aye tell't me a right true-born Scot's laird's wife sud pride hersel i' the language o' her country aw's weel's on aw thing else belonging tull't."

"I honour the maxim," said Sophia, "and have, indeed, felt half angry at the pains taken by many Scotch ladies to affect our pronunciation, which can never seem natural, in lieu of their own,



which I have often admired as graceful and pretty."

"Ah madam! I've no mat wi' mony o' yer countrywomen sae rawtional i' their opeenions; deed! it's the rudeness o' laughing at my language that gars me no to be unka wulling to uncloose my lips to strangers—wull ye tak a puckle sneeshing, madam?" opening her snuff-box.

Agatha, who had long been on the titter, now burst into a loud laugh, repeating "Puckle sneeshing! Puckle sneeshing! how funny! what does it mean?"

Sophia looked hurt; but the old lady good-humouredly interrupting the reproof she saw rising to her lips, said, "Weel a weel, madam! it's no the like o' this bonnie bairn that 'ell mortify me—its no the laugh o' ignorance I'll shrink frae—its the laugh o' aurogance I canna awa wi."

The word ignorance struck upon Aga-

tha's ear, as implying some sort of reprimand, though she did not altogether understand it, and she looked abashed, which the good old lady perceiving, held out the snuff-box for her to look at, and set her at ease again.

“ O how pretty ! whose picture is it ? ” cried Agatha, examining the miniature on the lid.

“ Whose sud it be, my dear ? but just the prince himsel ! ”

“ O my goodness, aunty, do but look how pretty the prince is !—is he just like that ? ”

“ May be you do not know, ” said the daughter, “ what prince it is my mother does mean ? ”

“ Why the R—t, an't it, aunty ? ”

“ Hout tout ! ” cried the old lady, and snatching back her box, returned it into her pocket, with an air of displeasure all Agatha's previous rudeness had not provoked.

This made it very clear to the visitors

that their new acquaintance must be a remnant of the true old Jacobite breed ; but how she should chance to be found there, it was not easy to conjecture.

Sophia expressed her surprise at the total absence of Scotch dialect in the daughter, who accounted for it by her having been born and educated in France, where she had married an Irish officer in the French service : his name was Fitzclare, she said ; and she was now a widow as well as her mother.

There was an air of subdued sensibility and meek endurance in Mrs. Fitzclare highly interesting, and when they separated, it was with a mutual desire of farther acquaintance.

Much discussion ensued upon the communications made by the equestrians at their return, and some curiosity was naturally excited.

“ Supposing them lately arrived from France, and on their way to Scotland,

what should have brought them to that place?" Mr. Villars wondered.

"And why so desirous of concealment?" Mrs. Villars added.

"There did not, however, seem to be any particular desire to avoid us," Sophia replied; "for you know, Emily, Mrs. Fitzclare came forward with Agatha, of her own accord, and invited us into the old lady's apartment."

"A mere wish for seclusion may easily be construed into a desire for concealment, by the people of the farm," said Emily: "there is something peculiarly interesting in the daughter."

Katty's mind strongly misgave her that there must be something wrong about them, and she was of the farmer's opinion; for she thought it stood to reason, that when people hide themselves, they have some cause for it; and she offered her services to take the first opportunity of the carriage going that way to sift the farmer and his wife upon the

subject. The idea of Katty's sifting was rather alarming; but as the distance was luckily beyond her walking powers, this remained to be avoided as occasion arose.

The strangers had awakened such a lively interest, that the visit was speedily repeated, and received with evident pleasure. The simplicity and national prejudices of the mother, and the cultivated mind and sweet manners of the daughter, still improved the desire for farther acquaintance; but no elucidation was obtained of what had brought them there.

On Mrs. Fitzclare's leaving the room to procure a cup of whey, she had persuaded Emily to take, Sophia observed to Mrs. Carstairs that her daughter appeared to have delicate health.

“Deed madam! she just destroys herself wi' her care o' me—I canna get her tak air or exerceede, and I fear me I'll just outlive my sole remaining comfort—for

I'm fully stronger nor she I wot—though it 'ell be hard gen siccan misfortune as that dinna gar my auld heart-strings crack!" And tears filled the poor old woman's eyes.

" Might we not succeed in prevailing upon her to take an airing with us, if we were to call in the barouche?" Emily asked.

" Deed my gude young lady, I canna just say ye wad succeed—but the trial o't wad be an unco kindness tull my poor bairn."

In their way home they overtook Katty. " Well! what have you got out of 'em?" she inquired.

" Nothing more."

" No, no; my life on't you get nothing more till it bursts forth with a witness—mercy defend us!"

The proposal of the barouche was approved of by Mrs. Villars; but being aware of Sophia's disposition to enthusi-

astic prepossessions and Emily's confiding temper, she wished to form her own opinion of these mysterious strangers. "Do you think I should distress your new acquaintance by going with you?" she asked.

"Undoubtedly not," replied Sophia; "they seem so gratified by our attentions, that they must be doubly so by yours, my dear mother."

The next day proving favourable, the barouche was ordered; and the kind intentions towards Mrs. Fitzclare perfectly answered. She thankfully accepted of the proposed airing, after having secured the attendance of the farmer's wife upon Mrs. Carstairs during her absence; and Mrs. Villars entirely concurred in the opinion of her daughters respecting the strangers.

These airings were occasionally repeated; still discretion on the one part, and reserve on the other, left curiosity afloat; and poor Katty's regular inquiry

at every return, of "Well! what have you got out of 'em?" only brought fresh disappointment, which she was very sure would be spared if she might be allowed to make one of the party; but some very good reason was always found to avert this, and her patience was nearly exhausted, when the recovery of Mrs. Carstairs from her gouty attack at length gave rise to an invitation for spending a day at the Priory.

Katty now on the tiptoe of expectation, called all her sagacity to her aid, but to little purpose; the mild demeanour of Mrs. Fitzclare, and the incomprehensible dialect of Mrs. Carstairs, equally baffled her penetration, though she clearly perceived they were very deep, and she was sure the old one talked such unintelligible gibberish, for fear of what she might betray if she spoke plain English.

Sophia had latterly been struck with an idea of the eligibility of Mrs. Fitzclare to take charge of the education of Aga-



tha; she seemed the very person to secure her against the impending mischief of another visit to Rock Castle. With such a companion she would be safe. Mrs. Fitzclare's partiality for the child, and the fondness with which it was returned, served to foster the plan in her mind; and, it had the approbation of Mrs. Villars, provided the mystery could be satisfactorily cleared up, but this was a delicate investigation to accomplish.

The second visit, however, gave an opening which was turned to account. Mrs. Fitzclare, in expressing her happiness at her mother's recovery, added, "We shall now be able to pursue our way to Scotland, while the weather is yet good."

Mr. Villars expressed his surprise that intending to go from France to Scotland, they should have come into Hampshire.

"It was a very particular reason had taken them to the Isle of Wight," Mrs. Fitzclare answered, but with agitation so

apparent as to check farther inquiry ; and a deep sigh from Mrs. Carstairs, accompanied by a starting tear, proved the reason to be distressing.

Soon after this, Sophia proposed a stroll into the shrubbery to Mrs. Fitzclare ; and when they were out of hearing, “ I deeply regret,” she said, “ that there should be a necessity for your hastening your steps to the north ; it would have been inexpressible pleasure to me that any snug little residence in this neighbourhood could have induced you to protract your stay at least till spring.”

“ We are not in the situation to consult our own liking quite ; my mother’s income does not suit with English living. We must go where cheapness invites :” Mrs. Fitzclare replied.

“ I am very unwilling,” Sophia returned, “ to incur the suspicion of wishing to pry into motives you may have reasons to conceal ; yet I am impelled, by an interest I know not how to resist,

to ask one question—check me, I entreat you, if it be improper—is that your only motive for hastening your departure?”

“It is a very urgent—but not the only one.” After a momentary hesitation, she added, “My poor mother is impatient to seek comfort of her relations; and great comfort, indeed, we do both want!”

“Shall I venture to disclose to you,” resumed Sophia, “a wish I have been cherishing from observing the mutual affection between you and my dear little girl?—it is, that I could devise any mode of obtaining for her a continuation of intercourse every way so beneficial to her.”

A tear of grateful sensibility strayed down the cheek of Mrs. Fitzclare, as she exclaimed, “O! I comprehend!—could any thing in this world compensate for my lost treasure, or give me again a wish to live, it would be such a charge in such a family. But, madam—goodness so un-

merited imposes on me the duty to place confidence unlimited; if you have now time to give ear, I will relate every sad circumstance."

With all the kind encouragement that could be given, Sophia listened to the disastrous tale; but it will come more satisfactorily before the reader, when farther acquaintance shall have increased the interest Mrs. Fitzclare is entitled to inspire; suffice it now to say that Sophia's feelings were wound up to the highest pitch of friendly sympathy for the deprivation her hapless companion mourned; and her eagerness augmented in proportion, to secure the benefit of her superintendence over Agatha's education. It was therefore settled between them, that she should see her mother safe to Edinburgh, and make over the care of her to those relations, whose attentions would scarcely be inferior to her own; and then, following up her hitherto fruitless search, whether it proved successful or not, she

would afterwards return to assist Mrs. Delmere in forming the mind and manners of her darling, at a stipend, about which they only differed from Sophia's wish to make it so much higher than Mrs. Fitzclare thought it reasonable to accept.

During their absence, Emily had sought to dispel the gloom that continued to hang upon the old lady's brow, by singing some Scotch ballads, which she did with great pathos, and obtained many tokens of approbation from her auditress, who did not let slip the opportunity of pointing out the pre-eminence of her country music over every other ; and was proceeding to trace the origin of Italian music from it, when a violent scream of Katty's broke into her discourse, followed by the exclamation, " There's a spider as big as a toad crawling upon her handkerchief ! "

Emily went to take it gently off without alarming Mrs. Carstairs, who had not caught the import of Katty's exclamation.

When the old lady perceived Emily's intention, she eagerly cried, "O dinna meddle wi't, my dear!"

"It won't hurt me, ma'am," said Emily, mistaking her meaning.

"Hurt ye!" she repeated with some indignation. "Deed na!—it 'ell no hurt ony ane—ye ken the Prence owed his life to siccane bonnie beastie aw's that—and I'd aw's soon commit sacrilege aw's let ony ane be harmed that I can save, but for aw that, it 'ell prefer a rose to my kerchief."—So saying, she leaned forward to the white cluster musk rose that grew against the house, and the spider having readily accepted the alternative, she added, with a look of much satisfaction, "By my troth, I kenned weel enough he'd be wulling to choice yon bonnie plant; he'd no gang sae readily tull a red ane!"\*

\* It may be necessary for the information of my young readers to observe, that a *white* rose was formerly worn on the tenth of June, by the loyal

A smile was with difficulty suppressed at this assertion of royal instinct; and Agatha asked how a prince could owe his life to a spider?

Mrs. Carstairs, with great glee, told her the well known story, of a spider's having spun its web over the mouth of the cave, in which the unfortunate *Chevalier* had just taken refuge after the loss of his last battle, and the soldiers who were in quest of him, having agreed to pass on, because they judged from it that nobody could have entered the cave that day; and she concluded her narrative with observing, "And this is the second time Scotland's weal has turned upon a spider; nae true Scot wull harm them, I sall answer."

The anecdote of the Bruce\* was then

adherents of the house of Stuart, in honour of the Pretender's birthday.

\* Robert Bruce, after being four times defeated, was tempted to relinquish the struggle, and go to the Holy Land; when, upon observing the exertions

also related by the good lady, with much animation ; and pleased with the interest her audience evinced, she went on to say, “ My peur Dumfrichen was sae true and leil a Scot he construked a wee bit housie wi his ain honds awa a refuge for the spiders in winter ; and he aye garred the maid colleck the flees frae the windows, and sweep ’em entull’t for their winter’s proveesion.”

Sophia now returned with her companion ; and Mrs. Fitzclare going up to Mrs. Villars, took both her hands, with strong emotion, saying, “ What a hope of unlooked-for comfort does your angel daughter hold out to me !—oh ! may I be able to justify the confidence she will repose !—she will tell you all particulars.”—

of a spider, continuing to swing itself from beam to beam, after having been six times foiled in the attempt to fix its thread, he became so interested in the event, as to determine that his own fate should rest upon its success. The seventh time the insect accomplished its aim. The Bruce then resolved to persevere, and gained the crown.



Agitation checked her farther utterance ; and Mrs. Villars, guessing in part at what had passed, gave an affectionate reply, which completed the pleasing anticipations of Mrs. Fitzclare.

## CHAP. XX.

DURING the remainder of Mrs. Fitzclare's stay at the farm, Agatha was sent to pass some hours of every day with her ; Mrs. Fitzclare was fond of natural history, and drew animals and flowers well. Agatha brought some home, and in displaying them to Sophia said, " And here is one so like that Sir Edward used to show me—I can't think of the name."

" When did Sir Edward show you any such thing?"

" In them beautiful books he gave me—O dear !" checking herself, " I forgot—I wasn't to tell.—"

“ Did Sir Edward Arundel forbid you to tell me any thing ?” Sophia asked with some surprise.

“ No—not *he*, aunty.”

“ Who then ?”

“ O but I’m afraid you’ll be angry, if I tell—and that made her bid me not.”

“ Made who ?”

“ Winny.”

“ Well, I shall not be angry at Winny—so tell me what books you mean !”

“ Why then—they were such beautiful books!—Sir Edward gave me at Rock Castle, all full of just such birds and creatures, as dear Fitz paints, and then he used to be so good-natured ; and he used to take me on his knee, and tell ’em me all ! I do love him so ! and he said I must remember their names to tell ’em you, and so I had got a great many by heart—but then Winny forgot to pack ’em up—and when I wanted ’em to show you, she was afraid you would be so angry, and so she said I mustn’t tell—and

I was very sorry, but I didn't like you to be angry at Winny—so I promised her I wouldn't—and you know, aunty, I didn't—only now I had quite forgot with seeing these here so pretty—so pray don't be angry at her!"

Sophia said she would not, but admonished her against entering into such engagements in future, and then—could not but let her thoughts dwell with some complacency on the various little instances so accidentally brought to light of Sir Edward's pleasing attentions to her darling.

The departure of Mrs. Fitzclare and her mother drew forth most affectionate feelings of regret at the Priory from all but Katty, who could not be thankful enough they were gone. Her terrors had fluctuated between the impression taken from the farmer of their being spies, and her own dreadful conjectures respecting witchcraft, founded on Agatha's account of some relics she had seen

of the deposed family; such as, a rag dipped in the blood of the prince, a tooth, &c. She “was not the dupe of such assertions, but saw clearly they were charms;” and her busy fears received ‘confirmation strong,’ from the horrible report of the blacksmith in the neighbourhood, who “she could assure her brother, had declared to herself that he had been made to burn the hair off a sheep’s head and trotters, with red-hot irons, for no purpose that she could think of in the known world, but incantations of witches such as she had read of in a play.”

An uncontrollable burst of laughter from Mr. Villars at this interpretation of the “singéd head,” so important to the perfection of Scotch broth, disconcerted his sister to a degree that caused her to break from him with an appearance of wrath not often to be traced in her good-humoured face.

Preparations were speedily after this

set on foot for the removal to Torquay, when a sharp seizure of gout put a stop to the hope of Mr. Villars being of the party ; for the season was fast advancing, and poor Emily's looks in such evident contradiction to her assertions of amendment, showed there was no time to be lost. Mrs. Villars had been somewhat seriously indisposed herself, and change of air was thought requisite for her, as well as for her daughter ; her wish to stay and nurse her husband was therefore overruled, and Sophia proposed her own removal to the Priory with Agatha during their absence, which set all hearts at rest.

Henry Villars had been thrown out of his arrangements with Lord Leonard Ormsby by this unforeseen journey into Devonshire ; he had given him immediate notice of the change ; his Lordship finding, however, that Mrs. Delmere remained, had without delay made an obliging offer to pass his Christmas at

Belmont Park; still without Henry's assistance this would afford but little chance of approaching Mrs. Delnere, and he earnestly conjured him to return for the holidays; to which he agreed, from an eager wish to promote Lord Leonard's interests with his sister, though very doubtful of being able to effect his admittance at the Priory.

Lord and Lady Belmont and Laura had been absent ever since the final separation between Charles and Emily; and as Parliament was to assemble earlier than usual, Lady Belmont and Laura were to stop in town during the short sitting, and the family to return altogether into Hampshire for the Christmas recess.

Charles Belmont's vanity had been as deeply wounded as his passion by Emily's firmness. He had conceived himself entitled to longer and severer struggles; her fever had, indeed, in some degree flattered him that love might still prove

his powerful friend ; but her subsequent steady refusal of seeing him (for he had attempted to gain access in more ways than through her mother and sister) highly incensed him ; and Laura added fuel to the fire, by her rejoicings in the extraordinary good accounts, she said, she received on all hands, of Emily's recovered health, looks, and spirits.

He could not shake off the mortifying sense of being so easily given up ; and he was tempted to try what might be done by awakening her jealousy ; or, if he only succeeded in wounding her pride, it would be some consolation—he would not call it revenge, for the pangs she had inflicted on him. Lady Sabina offered the ready means ; for Lord Kingsborough had also, contrary to his usual custom at that early time of the year, brought his family to town with him. Charles now, therefore, judged it expedient to give way to his father's frequently repeated exhortations to forego the continental scheme ;



thus voluntarily running his neck into the noose prepared for him, till he became entangled beyond the power, and, indeed at length, beyond the wish to extricate himself.

Lady Sabina's indolent disposition acquiesced so amiably in his attentions; Lord Belmont and Laura so artfully followed up the plan of pointing out imperceptible instances of her predilection for him—she was so eminently superior in every external charm and accomplishment to all that surrounded her!—so decidedly the leader of fashion!—All this, together with the persuasion easily enough excited in him, that the Villars family were purposely leaving the Priory to avoid his return into the neighbourhood at Christmas, worked him into a frame of mind quite favourable to the designs that were carrying on.

Lady Sabina had no immediate perception of the drift of his attentions, they were so little beyond what she was ac-

customed to receive ; but when her father acquainted her with the proposed alliance, and the expected aggrandisement of the Belmonts, she soon marked her concurrence, by those public distinguishing signs of preference, which convince the fashionable world that a treaty is on the *tapis*, and warn the crowd to keep aloof. The season of crowds, indeed, was not yet come ; but enough might be done, even at a small party, by the selection of a sofa apart from intruders for carrying on a whispering conversation, to throw the herd of dangles at that respectful distance, which is ever maintained till the re-appearance of a bride again licenses more unequivocal admiration, than very ton-ish men commonly allow themselves to express to single women.

The splendour of this sort of triumph proved irresistible ; to have captivated and engrossed the idol of the day ! to have it rest with his fiat to appropriate

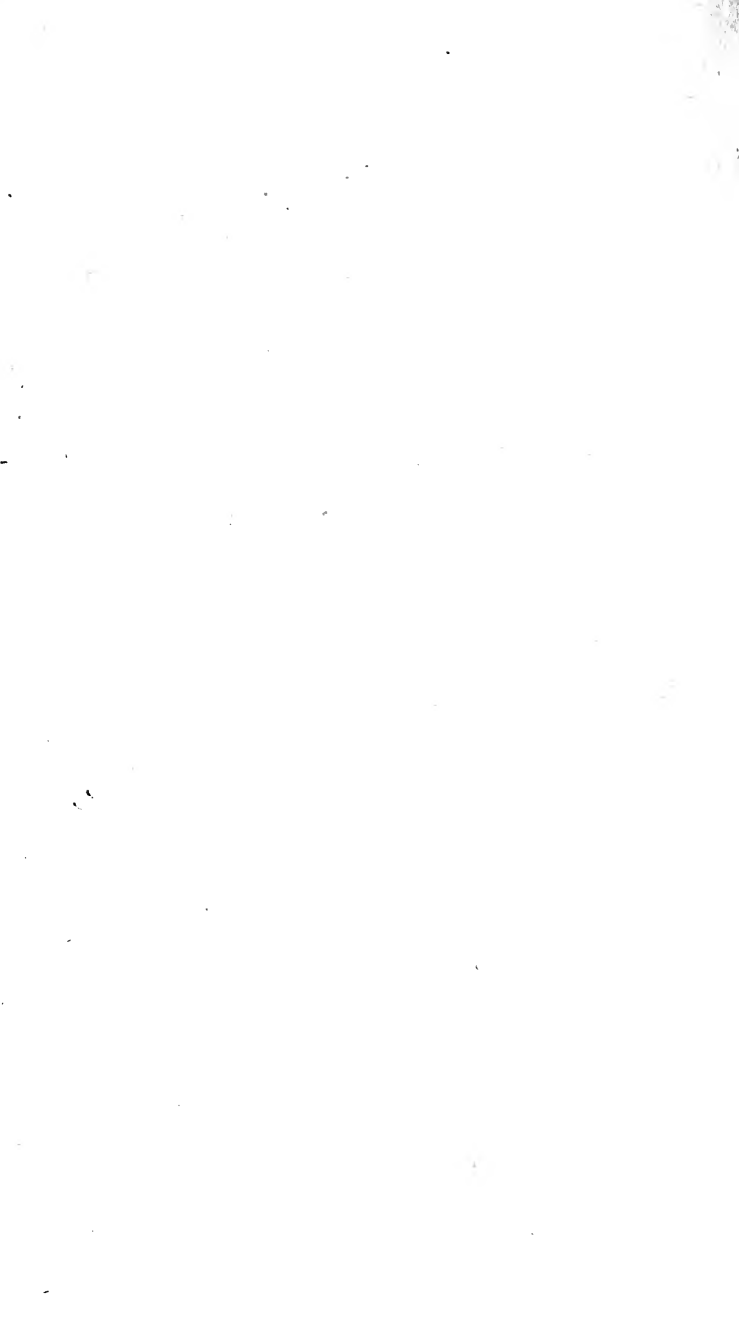
her to himself (as he believed) for ever! so gratified poor Charles's ruling foible—that Emily's image could not long maintain its place—it faded from his mind, and left him, what many a one has been before, the willing victim of pique and vanity.

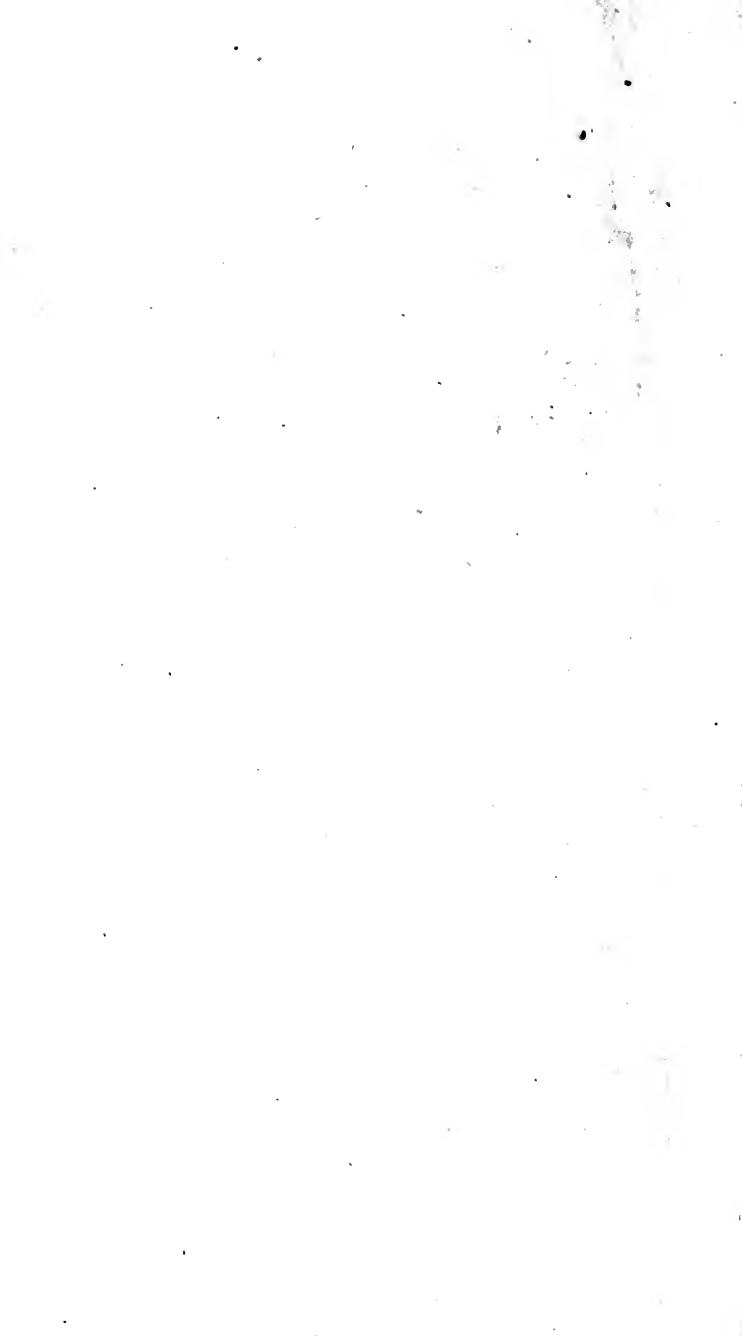
Laura carried on a most assiduous correspondence with Emily, with a view to the more effectual widening of the breach. She lamented, with endearing sensibility, the increasing attachment of her brother to Lady Sabina; at the same time extolling to the skies the noble part Emily had acted, which alone could have inspired him with the power of so soon and so completely subduing his first love.

Emily's severest sufferings had arisen from the sense of those she feared to have inflicted upon her lover; and however her own singleness of heart blinded her to Laura's subtlety, she could not help being struck with so rapid a transfer

of his affections. This feeling was strengthened in every letter, as she was constantly called upon to rejoice in the increasing effects of her heroic example. The eternal repetition at length succeeded in restoring a tone to her mind, which effectually assisted the healing powers of the mild climate to which she had been removed. Love, esteem, friendship, were terms so nearly connected in her ideas, that the moment which lowered Charles in her opinion, became decisive for the restoration of her tranquillity.

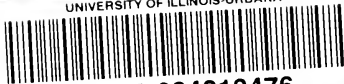
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